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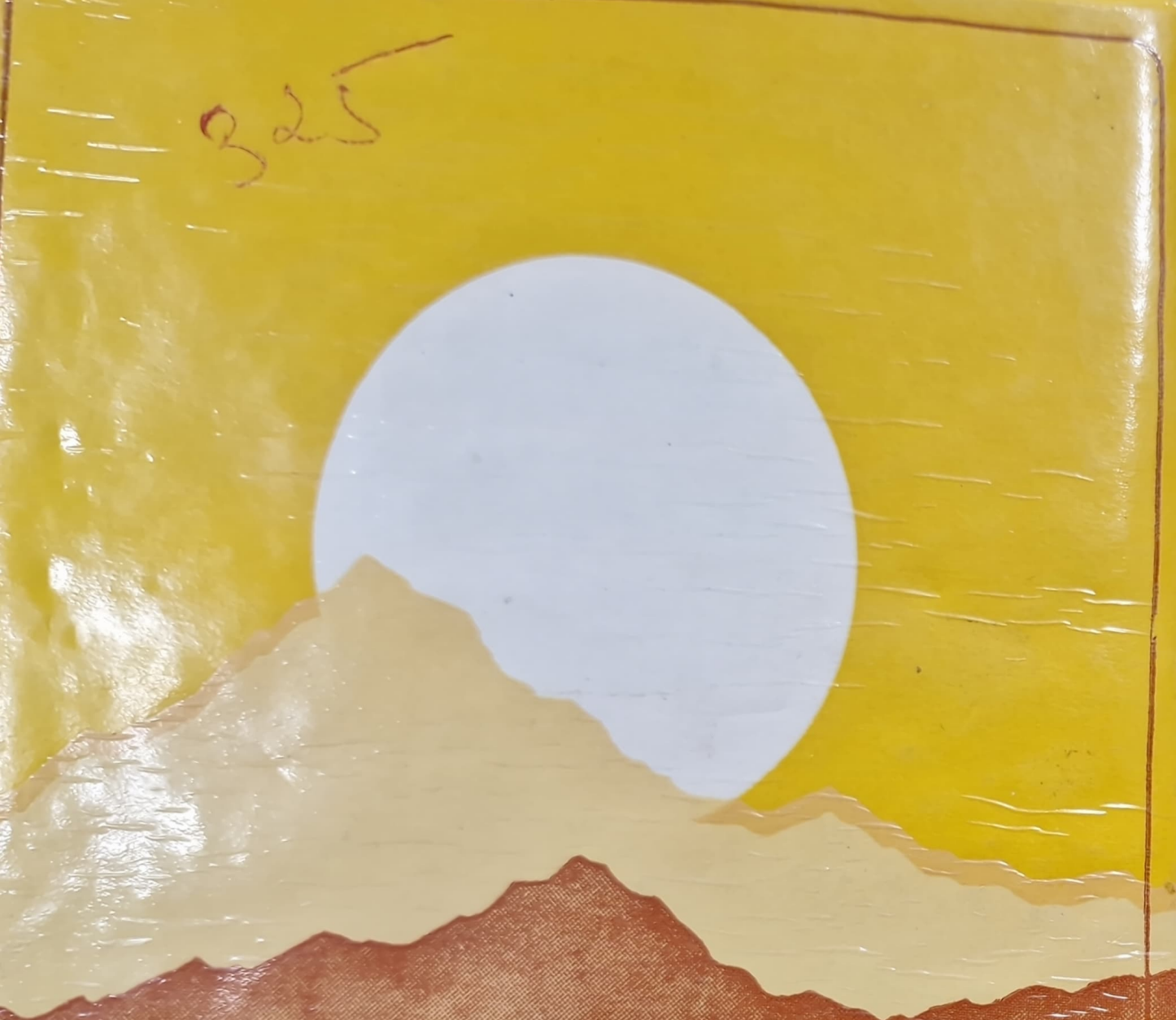

THE PROPHET OF THE AGE

SWAMI VEDANANDA

THE PROPHET OF THE AGE

A SHORT LIFE SKETCH

OF

ACHARYA SWAMI PRANAVANANDAJI

FOUNDER

OF

BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA

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Prof. Dr. Prashant N. Mukadam
G-4506 M.S.

Swami Vedananda

Published by :
Swami Nirmalananda
Bharat Sevashram Sangha
211 Rash Behari Avenue
Calcutta - 700 019.

Third Edition

Sri Sri Gurupurnima

20 July '97

Printed 3,000 copies

Price : Rs. 50.00

Prof. Dr. Prashant N. Mukadam
G-4506 M.S.

Printed by : Anish Paul
LINOBYTE
9C, Gobindapur Road,
Calcutta-700 045.
Phone : 473-0798

The World-Teacher Acharya Swamy Pranavanandaji Maharaj
Founder Bharat Sevashram Sangha

THE PROPHET OF THE AGE

In the unending process of creation, with the change of the old orders and prior to the advent of the newer epochs, appear on the Earth, as Divine Dispensation, gigantic spiritual personalities who set in motion tremendous movements in various fields of human life and its aspirations and achievements to usher into existence a fresh re–adjustment amidst the prevailing chaos, in the human society. These Divine tornadoes sweep away age–long heaps of sins and crimes, hypocrisies and inequities, coercions and persecutions reigning supreme in the heart of–mankind and in the human society ; Greatmen, Godmen, World–Teachers, Masters, Messiahs, Saviours, Incarnations —call them as you like. These great personalities—the Krishnas, the Buddhas, the Christs—carry in their bosom, the basic solutions of all the problems of the ensuing age and also Divine blessings and heavenly bliss as the universal balm for all ailings and wailings of the human heart. The Scriptures of all noted religions testify to the fact. The credal religions such as Christianity or Islam etc., believe in only a single Master or a few prophets, while the history of Hinduism is replete with recurring appearances of such Incarnations and re–Incarnations.

I feel extremely happy to bring to the notice of the expectant public, the life and messages of such a prodigious spiritual genius—**Acharya Srimat Swami Pranavanandaji.** The Acharya began his life as an unknown person in a village retreat. His spiritual life, outwardly unostentatious and unnoticeable, but deeply significant, passed from his very boyhood through most unusual austerities and self–discipline of the most perfect type ; till his whole life—his body, mind and intellect, even his movements and activities—all became Divinised ; so that he became a veritable

Divine Power–house,—an instrument, perfectly tuned, in the hand of the Supreme, through which the Almighty Will began to work out Her providential decrees.

Born in an age of spiritual decline and of material supremacy, besieging the human society from all sides and dragging down human intellect into the abyss of atheism and hedonism, the life of this prophet of the age was a striking contrast. His life was, so to say, an open declaration of war against the materialistic outlook of human existence, totally ostracized from its spiritual sublimation. His life—his unflinching vow of continence (Brahmacharya Sadhana), his uncommon spiritual penances and methods of self–discipline, his mode of living as regards dress, diet and habit, his ideals and principles, his thoughts and ideas, his plans and schemes of life–building—individual, social and national —all equally served as unerring pointers to the original type of the ancient Indian spiritual culture, built up by the Hindu saints and seers of the Vedic and Upanishadic ages, when the Hindus as a race, though they lived, moved, and acted heroically in this material world, had their being continuously in the plane of spiritual consciousness.

The Divine demand revealed through him was reorientation and re–adjustment of human life in every sphere, with its respective duties and responsibilities on the basis of spiritual ideals and principles. Thus it was that on the day he attained Salvation, on the very altar of his Divine Illumination, the Almighty Will pierced through his spiritual silence declaring—"This is an age of **Universal Awakening** ; this is an age of **Universal Unification** ; this is an age of **Universal Synthesis** ; this is an age of **Universal Emancipation**" ;—for realisation of which human life, individual and social, must needs be re–organised upon the four fundamental

spiritual ideals of **"Self–sacrifice, self–discipline, devotion to truth and continence".** But how and by whom would this Divine Dispensation be fulfilled ?

Of all the countries India has been from time prehistoric, the seed–bed of spirituality ; of all the nations, the Hindu has been the pioneer and teacher and preacher of spiritual ideals and messages amidst the benighted races and countries of the world. It is, however, an undeniable fact of history that during the last thousand years of slavery and servitude. the Hindus, for many reasons, failed to discharge that national responsibility.

But the prophet of the age foresaw that it was India and the Hindus who could and would save the Humanity from running headlong into gross materialism and Godlessness and lead worried mankind towards the path of peace and bliss. He voiced forth the message of hope that India and the Hindu nation would not lie long in inertia but would wake and rise up like a slumbering lion–cub and exhibit again the spiritual potentiality latent in him.

The Acharya realised the present degrading situation. When the time is ripe to throw open the doors of the spiritual heritage to all the bewildered peoples of the Earth, the Hindus as a nation, have been dazzled by the unusual glamour of the scientific material culture of the West and been madly running after it like moths unto fire ; that the tremendous waves of secular culture and civilisation have been dangerously dashing against the citadel of spiritual culture and tradition of India and the Hindus, threatening them with spiritual extinction.

The Acharya realised also that the Hindu nation and the Hindu society—the stronghold and treasure–house of spiritual culture—must needs, first of all, be saved from the terrible

onslaughts of gross materialism. He opined that the solution of the present world–problems, generated by the War–wearied but mutually intriguing materialistic nations of the world, depended upon gradually but steadily spritualising the entire outlook of human life ; which, of couse, again lies ultimately in the solution of the basic problems of the Hindu national life. He explained that continuous servitute under foreign domination for nearly a thousand years had eaten into the vitals of the Hindu nation ; as a result of which the Hindus as a nation have been over–ridden by an almost unshakable sense of defeatism and all the ills that follow in the train of political slavery ; so much so that the spiritual and cultural greatness of their fore–fathers have become a myth to them.

The Acharya set himself to fulfil the Divinely entrusted mission. For the purpose he organised the illustrious **"Bharat Seva–Ashram Sangha"**—a religious brother–hood of Sannyasins (monks) and selfless workers ; and trained them up to the pattern of his own life in the practice of the ideals of **self–sacrifice, self–discipline, Devotion to Truth and Continence.** With this battalion of trained missionaries who had given up everything and stood in the street in the name of the Lord and dedicated their lives to the service of mankind, the Acharya came out like a veritable spiritual Field–Marshal and declared war against the world–spread Lust and Mammon–worship. These apostles were to re–organise the Hindu population—their individual, social and national life on the basis of the eternal spiritual ideals of Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture. So that the spiritual genius of the vast Hindu population might manifest itself in all its glory and that the revitalised Hindu nation might march forward, as the champion of spirituality, to wage war for spiritual re–orientation of human life and society.

The Acharya had the inception of his Mission in the year 1916 when India and her people had been passing through untold trials

and vicissitudes in their political tussle with the British Government. Continuous oppressions and repressions had been rousing the sleeping lions—the Choice spirits of Indian soil—who had been growing more and more adamant to end the British supremacy at any cost. Since then in less than forty years, the prophecy of the Acharya has partly proved true ; the Britishers have been compelled to quit India, leaving the Indian people politically free ; the sleeping Leviathan in the Hindu masses has been speedily emerging out of its age–long slumber and growing conscious of their responsibility to uphold the spiritual ideals to the warring and worrying humanity and to sing to the thirsty ears of mankind, the message of hope, of peace and bliss amidst the jarring discordant notes.

Herein is an attempt to present before the readers a bare outline of the life and mission of the Prophet of the age. It is simply impossible to express an iota of such a towering spiritual personality in voluminous writings, even, what to speak of a little book like this. I realise in the heart of my heart that my attempt is no less ridiculous than that of a little child to catch at the Moon. But my consolation is in the thought that Divine Incarnations, being epitomes of the Infinity, are always beyond the conception of human genius which, however soaring, is but limited. However people always benefitted by whatever little they know or understand or discuss about these personified Gods.

My effort will be deemed successful if it can only create an inquisitiveness in the heart of the earnest readers about this Divine life and its Mission.

AUM.

THE DEMAND OF THE AGE

GREATNESS OF BENGAL

Of all the provinces of India, Bengal is the most blessed, being the birth place of many a towering genius and nation–building leaders of the age. Bengal produced the famous **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** and the divinely gifted **Keshab Chandra Sen** ; Bengal gave birth to the greatest of the poet–philosophers of the Twentieth Century—the Seer **RabindraNath Tagore**—the Nobel–prize–winner ; Bengal has been proud of the great saint of Dakshineshwar—Sri Sri **Ramkrishna Paramahansa Deva** and his illustrious heroic disciple **Swami Vivekananda** ; **Sri Aurobinda,** the world–known yogi and philosopher, is also a unique production of Bengal. These great spiritual and cultural magnets widely replenished the spiritual treasure–house of the Supreme to share the same, not only with their own people—the Hindus, but with the entire humanity. Their universal philosphy, messages and teachings have been receiving wide appreciations, all over the world, as divine light to the benighted souls and as healing balm to the lacerated hearts.

Bengal with its temperate climate, its vast fields of luxurious green verdure, its widespread planes, its wide navigable rivers and innumerable rivulets, its dense forest with the grand snowcapped Himalayan range on the North, with the infinite blue vault over head with its sunny days and moon–lit starry nights, can be called in true sense of the term, the choice pleasure–garden of mother Nature. Rocked and nurtured like a pet child in the affectionate lap of the smiling Nature of Bengal, the sons of the soil have, all along, been gifted with overflowing emotion, warmth of feeling and superfine sentiments, so that Bengal had always been in the fore–front of the nation to readily and intuitively catch and radiate

the inspiration and demand of the age, as well as, the needs of the hour. This peculiar nature of the sons of Bengal adorned their character with a few noble features :—

***(a)* Independence of thought and reasoning ; (*b*) Spirit of sacrifice and life–long devotion to truth ; (*c*) an uncompromising struggle against all odds for realisation of the object.**

Amidst this beautiful panorama of Nature and a people of such a unique genius and subtle emotional heritage and spiritual tradition, appeared another towering spiritual genius—an illustrious patriot–saint—more comprehensive, more synthetic, more practical, more inspiring, more electrifying, more loving, more sympathetic, and more active. **Acharya Swami Pranavananda was a wonderful personality,**—a continuous God–consciousness, as if easier than life–breath even, wedded to the most intense and incessant activity towards fulfilment of a Divinely entrusted Mission. Sri M. N. Mukherji, the chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, who had close intimacy with the Acharya for years together, being extremely pained at the premature demise (at the age of forty four only) of the Acharya, told with tearful eyes and over flowing emotion that the nation had lost Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa, the God–intoxicated saint and his disciple—the heroic Swami Vivekananda, the glorious champion of Hinduism ; but that national loss was amply recompensed by the appearance of Acharya Swami Pranavanandaji—as if a combination of both the foregoing supermen and shone in the spiritual and social horizon of India like the blazing Sun ; that with the setting of the spiritual sun, the golden crest of Hinduism—Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture—went out of sight.

THE NEEDS OF THE HOUR

To properly understand why the advent of this greatman was necessary at all amidst Indian people at this period of national transition, we ought to take a bird's–eye view of the situation of India and her people—religious, social, cultural and political and also take into account the various forces at work in the society for national emancipation in different fields of activities.

FOUNDATION OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

The dawn of the ninteenth century saw the Britishers to have become the sovereign power in India, after subduing all the rival powers, then vying with one another for political supremacy. During this British domination, the latent genius of the suppressed Hindu nation was first released through the pioneer personality of **Raja Ram Mohan Roy.** He appeared mainly as a religious and social reformer and founded the **Brahmo Samaj** with religious and social progressive ideas and ideals, as against the religious and social conventions of the orthodox Hindu society. The movement, set in motion, by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, subsequently gathered momentum and under went gradual changes in the hands of the successive leaders. During the last half of the ninteenth century, the Brahmo Samaj became a powerful religious and social force in India, specially, in the eastern part. It had done great service in stemming the baneful tide of Christianity and European culture and civilisation ; it particularly saved young Bengal from becoming totally anglicised and converts to Christianity, by accomodating them in its progressive atmosphere.

FOUNDATION OF THE ARYA SAMAJ

A little later, a more powerful religious and social reformatory movement was launched in the western part of India by the

illustrious saint **Swami Dayananda**, the founder of the famous Arya Samaj that fought valiantly with success against the aggressive fanaticism of Islam and went a great way to save the Hindu society. The Arya Samaj not only saved the Hindu population from being converts, in hundreds and thousands, to Islam and Christianity but reclaimed thousands of renegade Hindus by introducing the re–conversion ceremony (Shuddhi). To Arya Samaj is also due the credit of infusing into the masses the spirit of Hindu revival and Hindu–sangathan (Organisation).

The Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj both admitted only the formless aspect of God—the Absolute (Brahman). But while the former depended, for its doctrinal inspirations upon the Upanishads, the philosophical portion of the Vedas, the latter drew its draughts of creeds and dogmas from the ceremonial part. Both the Institutions separated themselves from the bulk of the vast Hindu society by their fixed creeds and doctrines, which remained, since then, unchanged and unchangeable ; the result had been that with the already existing innumerable religious sects and social classes, castes and subcastes of the Hindu society, were added two more.

REVIVAL OF ANCIENT HINDUISM

Naturally a strong reaction followed in the orthodox bulk of the Hindu society and a powerful movement ensued under the auspices of a number of talented leaders. **Swami Krishnananda**, the gifted orator, came out as a champion of the ancient Hinduism (Sanatana Hindu Dharma) and moved like a shooting star from Kabul in Afganistan to Manipur in Assam, illuminating and inspiring the Hindu masses with his charming eloquence and higher exposition of the ideas and ideals of Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture. **Pandit Shashadhar** Tarkachûdamani carried on a vigorous propaganda ; he explained the scientific background of Hinduism and helped the masses to think of the teachings of the Hindu

Scriptures from a new angle of vision. They were followed by many more who carried on the movement all over Northen India. Hundreds of holy shrines of the **Divine Mother Kali** and **Harisabha** (the holy place for congregational chanting of the sacred Name of the Lord and for scriptural expositions) were set up from town to town and from village to village. Strange to note that side by side with the foregoing institutions of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, went on the revivalist movement of the Sanatana Hindu Dharma ; but no mentionable hitch or quarrel was noticeable between these two divergent schools of thoughts and ideas.

RAM KRISHNA–VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT

Next came a synthetical religious movement originated by the God–intoxicated saint **Sri Ram Krishna Paramahansa** of Dakshineshwar and his famous disciple Swami Vivekananda who, as a representative of Hindusim in the Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in America in 1893, established the greatness of Hinduism, beyond doubt, as the only synthetic religion that included all the aspects of God and all the methods of realisation, preached in the scriptures and gospels of various faiths of the world. Sri Ram Krishna, through his divine personality set up an equilibrium amidst the doctrinal tussles of various religious sects, by himself practising and admitting all as true, being different paths to the same goal ; just as many rivers proceeding through various zig–zag courses merge into the same ocean,

Swami Vivekananda pushed on this synthetic out–look further into the realm of philosophy, established Indian philosophical conclusions on scientific basis and exposed with his uncommon genius that all the various schools of philosophy are but gradual steps towards realisation of the Absolute. The Swamiji also rendered invaluable services in rousing up the national

consciousness of manhood and manliness amongst the Hindus and inaugurated the famous **Ramkrishna Mission** to carry on social welfare works for amelioration of the poor, distressed and downtrodden masses of India.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL MOVEMENTS

Vast progressive changes were also brought about in the educational and cultural side of the national life. English education, advocated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others, gradually, imprinted indelible stamps of foreign culture and civilisation on the heart and brain of the Indian people ; so much so, that Lord Mecaulay's proud vaunt of cultural conquest became almost an accomplished fact. side by side, an indigenous cultural revival movement was introduced by the uncommon genius of **Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar** and later on by the great literary talent of **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** and a galaxy of his satellites. The great Poet–Seer **Rabindra Nath Tagore,** later attempted at a fusion of the best elements in the Eastern and Western cultures.

MOVEMENTS FOR POLITICAL FREEDOM

Political consciousness was awakening rapidly. Movements for shaking off political thraldom went on in two distinct lines. There was the revolutionary movement championed by Sri Aurobinda Ghose ; which gathered momentum from the Bengal partition Movement, popularly known as the Swadeshi Movement and drew inspiration from the famous book **"Ananda Math"** and the immortal national anthem **"Bande Mataram"**. Many enthusiastic youths dedicated their lives, at the altar of the fight for freedom, as fuels to kindle up the fire of revolution to burn down the citadel of the British Government.

The Indian National Congress had its origin under the leadership of **Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee** and a host of his

colleagues, Mr. W.C. Banerjee being the first president. The Congress passed through gradual evolutions and India's will to rid herself of the iron shackles of the British Government grew more and more clear and accentuated. No one could then dream that this political movement, being fettered by British diplomacy, will gradually develop into a denationalising force to deal almost a deathblow to India and Hindu Nation. Our latter national champions preferred political freedom of India, as a geographical territory to religious, social and cultural unity and existence. They accepted the political denomination "Non–Muslim" and later "General" for the overwhelming Hindu population who were three–fourths of the inhabitants of India. The Religious, social and cultural rights and privileges of the Hindus were unscrupulously sacrificed at the altar of Muslim–appeasement, and Hindu–Muslim unity ; Hindu masses, were massacred, persecuted and converted into Islam and Hindu women were abducted and molested, in hundreds and thousands, in organised communal orgies, at the altar of political freedom.

Any man, free from political bias, will surely admit that, even, now–a–days, in free India, there are many political champions who are against any thing concerning the Hindus and Hinduism ; some of them even go farther to denounce Hindu culture as a fantastic thing.

In view of the contemporary heterogeneous forces at work in India, referred to above, what occurs to a thoughtful mind, is that India's inner self had been anxiously waiting for a Divine Nation–builder and a deliverer of Humanity who would inaugurate a powerful all–comprehensive religio–socio–cultural upheaval which would synthesise and tactfully collaborate the inner spirit and the progressive elements of all the foregoing religious, social and cultural waves into a homogeneous organisational movement,

on the basis of a combination of the spiritual ideals of the Vedic Hinduism and the spirit of the Buddhist Sangha, to form an adamant bulwork against the un–Hindu and un–Indian, political and cultural developments.

The celebrated **Acharya Swami Pranavanandaji** appeared, as a Divine Descent—the Prophet of the Age—to fulfil this national and philanthropic demand.

THE DIVINE ACHARYA

The word **"Acharya"** means a spiritual Master who himself puts into practice, in thought, word and action, in his daily life, what he teaches and preaches, what he desires to be followed and practised by mankind, what would be ameliorating and blissful to people of all ranks—high and low alike. Our Acharya incarnated himself as the universal teacher who would guide people from the highest to the lowest status of the society, through their respective duties and responsibilities. As such his life, his thoughts and words, his ideals and principles, his character and activities were all–sided, all comprehensive, entirely free from mysticism and partiality of any kind ; his teachings were intensely practical, easily comprehensible and fully practicable. Such was the wonderful personality of the "Acharya".

The Acharya's wonderful life and Misson—his all–devouring personality included religious and social reformatory and progressive spirit of the Brahma Samaj, the Suddhi and Sangathan (Reconversion and Reorganisation) spirit of the Arya Samaj, against the aggressive Islam and Christianity ; the spirit of spiritual and cultural revival of ancient Hinduism and the synthetic practice and interpretation of religious doctrines and philosophical conclusions of Sri Ramkrishna–Vivekananda movement ; nay, it

imported much more, as we shall notice in course of his life–sketch.

We had the rare privilege to live with the Acharya, to build up our life and character under his careful and affectionate training and to work in implicit obedience to his directions for nearly a quarter of a century. During these long, long years, we had ample opportunity to keenly observe and minutely scrutinise him, day after day, and finally came out with the invincible conviction that our Acharya, although he lived, moved and worked in the material world, in a material body, had his being constantly in the plane of God–consciousness, always unconscious or half–conscious of his physical existence. His body followed the spirit in him like a shadow following the substance. His body, mind and intellect was a veritable instrument, through which the Supreme Divinity worked.

He lived in his paternal home, amidst the busy household life, but still he led a life of physical and mental seclusion, immersed in his spiritual silence. He was extremely meditative and reflective by nature from his very birth ; but strangely enough, he never kept himself aloof from social welfare activities of any sort and was intensely particular about the moral welfare of the surrounding youths whom he spared no pains to help, in all possible ways, in building up their life and character.

In short, the life and mission of the Acharya could be well compared with the life and mission of the few Godmen—Incarnations of the Supreme as they are held—the Sri Ramchandra, the Sri Krishna, the Buddha and the Christ.

These words of introduction are necessary at the outset because in our close study of the short life–sketch of the Acharya, we might have a true estimate of the kaleidoscopic spiritual genius of this wonderful superman–personality.

Acharya Swami Pranavanandaji

BIRTH PLACE AND PARENTS

Bajitpur is a small village of very little importance, in the district of Faridpur, in East Bengal, surrounded by vast open green fields on all sides and full of thickly over–grown trees and bushes inside. It is a typical village of East Bengal, annually innundated and washed by the floods of the turbulent river Padma. It is situated on the southern bank of the river Kumar at a distance of nearly a mile across an open meadow. A small streamlet, rising out of the river Kumar, enters the village in a zig–zag course and penetrates the remote recesses of the village by several of its off–shoots.

Across the field where the streamlet proceeds on into the centre of the village proper in the · form of a right angle, lived Bishnucharan Das, a well–to–do middle class Kayastha (Kshatriya caste) in a decent house with a spacious compound, including an orchard of rich and rare fruits and big tanks of clear transparent water. He was popularly called Bishnu Bhuinya, Bhuinya meaning a land–owner. He possessed a strongbuilt, stout physique and an indomitable manhood and a lofty manliness. He had to struggle face to face for many a dangerous years with untold vicissitudes but he came out heroically, unbended and unhurt, with all the more glory and redoubled courage and self–confidence.

Bishnu Bhuinya served in the estate of a local zeminder who, being related to the then Maharaja of Mymensing, was haughty and extremely tyrannical. This despot spared no opportunity to exercise his prerogatives over the poor subjects, inflicting inhuman injuries upon them. But the stubborn manhood of Bishnu Bhuinya could not long tolerate this injustice and oppression without protest. Behind the stout heroic character, the Bhuinya had a heart full of the milk of human kindness ; his heart bled for the suffering

tenants. At last the Bhuinya revolted and stood by the side of the poor rayats against the despot landlord and there ensued legal fights for a long period, extending over more than twenty years. During this period, the tyrant–zeminder, of course, organised a sinister conspiracy to finally remove Bhuinya out of existence ; failing which he had some poor people assassinated and instituted criminal suits against the Bhuinya as the perpetrator. But strange enough, all attempts of the despot went futile by the grace of the Almighty and the Bhuinya won all the cases, one after another. This successive victory against the powerful zeminder, naturally, surprised the local public and a whisper went round that Bishnu Bhuinya had been vouchsafed the grace of the Divine Mother Kali.

Seriously entangled in the meshes of grave dangers, during this period, the devout soul of the Bhuinya undertook a year–long penance to propitiate the grace of the Lord Shiva, the dispenser of the well–being of the world and the destroyer of all evils. He prayed and meditated, all night long, to the Almighty Lord for relieving the poor and the helpless of the world from the iron–clutch and tyranny of the rich and the power intoxicated. At last his heart–rending prayers were heard and he, in his deep devotional trance, heard the voice of the Lord declaring "I shall incarnate myself as thy son and fulfil thy desire:" In the same night while in deep sleep, the wife of the Bhuinya dreamt a strange dream in which she saw that Shiva–the Lord of Gods, assuming the from of a lovely child, illuminating the house with His heavenly lustre, lay in her lap. The wife of the Bhuinya was extremely frank and sincere and deeply devout and pious by nature ; she was so simple and artless that she could hardly discriminate between friend and foe and her heart always wept for the people in distress. If the Lord has to incarnate in human from (as the scriptures of all faiths admit) whom He should choose but such Divinely gifted devout couples, as His parents ?

DIVINE DESCENT

At last arrived the eagerly expected day of fulfilment of the Divine vision. It was the blessed evening of the holy full–moon day in the month of Magha in 1896 *.

The whole village was revelling in a trance of joy, the sky being rent asunder by incessant peals of 'Harinam' (loud chanting of the name of the Supreme) ; the hearts of the devotees were lovingly immersed in the prayer and meditation upon the Lord. The beautiful vernal season had just set in ; the gardens were smiling with sweet fragrant flowers of variegated colours ; dark green verdure in the wide open fields was enamelled with the silvery moon–light ; the Cuckoos and other messengers of spring were pouring out their delightful melodies ; the day was peaceful, the sky clear and serene ; the whole aspect of nature was beautiful and pleasant.

The baby–God adorned the lap of the blessed Madonna with a divine halo of purity ; all its limbs were so perfectly proportionate and charmingly well–shaped and such loveliness played over its entire system that whoever had a look at it, he or she felt an inexorable affectionate attraction towards it and he or she would have been tempted to take it in their lap at least for a few minutes. Surprising it is to note that with the appearance of this divine child the Bhuinya emerged out of the perilous conspiracy of the despot Zeminder like an unclouded sun ; he rose steadily and speedily to

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* Maghi-Purnima (the full-moon day of the month of Magha) is held as one of the most auspicious days by the Hindus ; worship of the Lord and congregational chanting of the Name of the Lord are celebrated almost in every village in Bengal together with protracted religious functions, attracting thousands of pious people from far and near.

social status and economic prosperity. The Bhuinya them intuitively called fresh in his memory, once again his divine vision and the inscrutable benediction of the Lord Shiva and named the baby as "**Jaynath**" i.e. the Lord of Victory ; the child was also named "**Budha**", being bron on Wednesday. But the real and popular name, by which he was known afterwards was "**Binode**" i.e. the source of joy. In fact as the boy grew up like the waxing moon it always shed a lustre of celestial joy in the heart of all who came near him.

A MINIATURE SHIVA

Mohendra Nath Chakravarty, the son of the guardian priest of the Bhuinya family, who had been an intimate companion of Binode, from his very boyhood, once told in loving appreciation of the Acharya, in memory of his glorious and wonderful boyhood that the name Binode (the sourse of joy) was most appropriate to him, in the truest sense of the term, in as much as, his charming physical features, his polite and unobstrusive manners and habits, his sweet words and delightful behaviours,—every thing concerning him was in fact a feast of joy to the eyes, mind and heart ; that whoever came in touch with him was invariably saturated with an uncalled for exhilaration that his sweet and sincere talk, his meditative nature, his gentle movements, his spirit of non–attachment to worldly afffairs were sure and unavoidable points of attraction, bringing in endless felicitation to all ; that in all seasons, he had a pair of milkwhite clothes (Dhuti and Chadar) to cover his body from neck to foot, as if divine purity and untarnished chastity of his inner self, being embodied, encircled, his physique with a dazzling aura ; that his oval–shaped charming face, half appearing through the parted tufts of long dark curling hair, shone like a full–blown lotus half covered with its leaves ; that to a casual observer, the sight of Binode would, at once suggest that

he had been blessed with a concrete vision of the great Lord Shiva, personified as the boy Binode.*

As the child grew up to boyhood, he became the "cynosure of neighbouring eyes". Thus the delightful news ran a pace from man to man and from village to village that a wonderful child had been born, by the grace of the Lord Shiva, to Bishnu Bhuinya. This created an unusùal curiosity in the heart of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, who, whenever they had a chance of visiting Bajitpur, did not miss the opportunity to have a look at the Divine Boy. Many of the visitors would exclaim in astonishment "Look, look, the boy is a miniature Shiva."

Like Shiva too, the Boy, calm and serene by nature, having always total dispassion for the world outside, with regard to his physical needs even was found immersed within himself in his own contemplation ; sometimes, the Boy would be missing ; when the anxious parents, after long weary search, would find him lost in meditation under some tree, in a lonely corner of the orchard. Such contemplative and meditative nature could only be marked in the life of Buddha Deva in his boyhood when he was known as Siddhartha.

A DIVINE BOY

The only thing of interest of the Divine Boy, in the outside world, was to be in the midst of the party of devotees during their devotional chanting of the Lord's Name ; there too the Boy would stand or sit, perfectly calm and quiet, listening to the melodious singing. The presence of the boy would send a thrill of divine fervour and joy in the heart of the devotees who would sing

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* Shiva, the Lord of Gods, has been described in the Hindu Scriptures to be all white like a mountain of silver.

untiringly with redoubled enthusiasm and felt actual touch of the benign mercy and benediction of the Lord.

Once out of childish nature, the boy spat upon a "Tulsi" plant, when suddenly the presiding deity of the plant made her appearance before the Boy with an admonishing countenance ; the Boy at once fell in a trance and saw that the goddess in her luminous form entered into his person. Later in life, he would teach his disciples to have particular respect for the "Tulshi" plant, saying that a few minutes' concentration was sufficient to make the plant speak.

The Boy was utterly careless about his diet. He did not take fish or meat but relished vegetarian dish composed of rice and salt only, some times with a few boiled potatoes. Once his relatives prevailed upon him to take a little quantity of fish ; whereupon the boy fell ill, with concomitant vomitting of violent type. After this unhappy incident, none would venture to disturb him as regards diet.

There was in the house of the Bhuinya, an aged maid–servant who had been of a frivolous character in her youth. Being attracted by a motherly affection, the old maid–servant felt a desire to take the boy on her lap and caress him. But the Boy had a great dislike for the woman and always intuitively avoided her, even when he was a little child. The mother of the Boy, who knew the early history of the maid–servant, kept watchful eye over her boy to keep him always at safe distance from the touch of the woman. In spite of the vigilance of the mother, once the maid–servant took up

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"Tulsi" a small plant, is held in great sanctity by the Hindus, specially by the Vaishnava sect and is worshipped ceremoniously. "Tulsi" is, as enjoined by the scriptures, specially favourite to the Lord Narayana who himself resides in it. Many legends are found in the Puranas dealing with the Divinity of "Tulsi".

the reluctant boy in her lap. Forthwith eruptions of virulent type began to crop up all over his body.

The boy fell ill ; no medical treatment could cure him. Despairing of his life, the mother sought the mercy of the Goddess 'Bana Durga' the presiding deity of the village, the Divine Mother of the Universe, worshipped her with utmost devotion and offered the Boy to Her feet. From that day forward the Boy gradually came round. Many years later, we heard the mother often to say that she had dedicated the son to the Divine Mother and that the son did belong to herself no longer.

THE WONDERFUL STUDENT

As the child grew up to boyhood, he, having finished the course of the village pathsala (Primary School), was admitted into the local high school. Binode, although very regular in his attendence was found utterly careless about his studies. "He would take his seat" wrote Babu Birendra Lal Bhattacharya, the then Head Master of the school who loved Binode very dearly and always craved the electrifying company of the boy, during his (Head Master's) religious functions and spiritual practice "on the farther end of a bench in the corner of the class–room, immersed in his own thoughts ; that whenever any question was put to him about his class–lessons, he would answer like a man, just emerged out of deep slumber ; his mind was always so much drawn inward that he could hardly attend to his studies."

Often it so happened that after the school period had been over and the teachers and students had all left the school, Binode was found sunk deep in his contemplation for hours together and when he came to his normal consciousness, he would rise up and proceed home–ward. But strange it is to note that this unmindful student was beloved alike by all the teachers and students who had such an

instinctive awe and regard for him that none of them ever dared or cared to disturb him.

Binode was a born leader and a God–ordained spiritual teacher. This characteristic of his was evinced even in his early student life. The students of the school were all naturally drawn, they knew not why, towards this unobstrusive and meditative boy and made him their leader and would implicitly obey his decisions in all matters of controversy. In the short interval for tiffin during the school–hours, Binode would often be seen standing calm and smiling in the verandah of the school room, surrounded by the students, who swarmed round him, like bees in the hive and eagerly hung upon every word that fell from his sweet lips.

At home, he would be closetted in his thatch in the outer courtyard of the house and cared more for his meditations than for his studies. Many a time, it was found that at night Binode had sat down to study ; the book was opened before him and the light burning, but he, lost in meditation, passed the whole sleepless night, unconscious of the world outside ; in the morning when some body knocked at the bolted door, he would come to his senses. Binode made very little progress in his studies and read up to the Matriculation standard.

We know many things about student Binode from the letters of the Head Master, Sri Birendra Lal Bhattacharya ; in which there is a specially remarkable point that revealed the inner spirit of this wonderful student. Binode often expressed with a sobbing heart his deep concern to his Head Master, at the moral degradation of his fellow students. He always reflected upon how to save these young budding flowers, the future assets of the nation from moral ruin and discussed with the Head Master about the remedy. Binode was often so disconsolate that he passionately expressed his determination to renounce the world and dedicate his life for the

moral and spiritual emancipation of the nation and said that his life was not worth–living at all, if he could find no solution of the problem. The Head Master frankly wrote in his letter that although he had been the Head Master and the boy Binode his student, yet while discussing the problems of the hour, Binode spoke with such overwhelming compassion and sincerity of heart, with such spiritual fervour, heroic conviction and a prophetic vision that the boy appeared to be a veteran infallible nation–builder and he, the Headmaster a pigmy before him.

THE IDEAL BRAHMACHARIN

Binode was an ideal Brahmacharin—a glowing embodiment of perfect self–control and continence. He led, from his very boyhood, a life of wonderful self–discipline. No unnecessary word passed out of his lips ; he walked not a single step, no movement of the limbs of his body was noticeable, without necessity. He was found always calm and quiet, serene and peaceful.

He would, under no circumstances, be found to be off the equilibrium of his mind. His teacher Birendra Lal Bhattacharya referred to an occasion of Shivaratri festival that, while they were revelling in loud chanting of the Lord's Name and other rituals, Binode had been sitting the whole night like a stone–statue, lost in meditation. His diet was a quantity of rice with some boiled potatoes ; he slept but very little, an hour or so ; that too in a sitting posture. His guiding motto was that idleness, inertia, procrastination, slothfulness, slumbering habits were the greatest enemies of man. As the boy grew to adolescence, sleep was totally left off and Binode went, six long years, without a wink of sleep, in practising uncommon penances, meditation and spiritual trances. At this period of his life he remained sunk in deep meditation in his lonely thatch during the day and passed the whole night lost in Divine trances in the cremation ground, not far from his paternal house.

Once his father asked Mahendra Nath Chakravarty, the son of their guardian priest, to request Binode to take at least some quantity of milk and clarified butter which were but vegetarian diets and as such were in no way prejudicial to a Brahmacharin. Accordingly Mahendra told Binode his father's desire and requested him to include in his diet, a little quantity of milk and clarified butter. Binode replied with a smile that he would have enough strength and nourishment, if he could but strictly preserve the energy endowed by the Lord, as birth–right. He cleared the point by an analogy that a small quantity of milk, when heated in a pan upto the boiling point, overflows ; similarly, if he took milk, clarified butter and other rich diet on the plea of nutrition, Semen— the essence the energy crystallized, of the body and the mind, would be similarly heated and then it would be impossible to control the mind and the senses and check the emission of the matter. Binode assured Mahendra that he had been so intensely particular about preservation of semen that he suffered not a drop of it to be wasted and that as a result, his body and mind had grown to be a veritable reservoir of infinite energy.

Later in life when Binode came out as the Acharya, the builder of life—individual and national, he would instruct his young followers to practice Brahmacharya which is the be–all and the end–all of spiritual practice and that preservation of semen by austere self–discipline and self–control is the essence of the "Brahmacharya Sadhana". Once, after practice of spiritual trances

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"The Absolute can be realised only through devotion to truth, austere self–discipline, knowledge to the unreality of the world and by Brahmacharya Sadhana".

No sort of penance is worth the name at all if it is not based upon Brahmacharya or continence. He who has been able to fully conquer lust and thus preserve the semen intact, is no man but a veritable God—the manifestation of the Supreme.

for nine days together at a stretch, Binode had his brain extremely heated and blood began to flow profusely through his nostrils. His father was seriously alarmed and was about to call in a physician when Binode assured him that he was not attacked with any disease but that the discharge of blood was simply due to his excessive Yogic practice. His father could not believe and expressed his doubt as to whence and from whom he learned Yogic Sadhana ; for the father never found him to move out of his house to learn any such thing from any teacher of Yoga. Binode consoled him out of his doubts, that he was in no need of any teacher and that he knew all the Yogic processes by intuition and not from any human teachers. The father was greatly astonished and recalled once more his Divine vision and the Divine origin of his son.

The Brahmachari was, as it were, manhood and manliness personified. He was not to believe in or accept to be true anything because it had been handed down or was being followed or performed through hundreds of generations. He would not take for granted anything until he had not tested it himself. An incident will illustrate this feature of his character. On an occasion of the Durgapuja festival which is the grandest of religious celebrations amongst the Bengali Hindus, the Brahmachari went in the dead of night to see the image of the Goddess Durga in a house, a few furlong off from that of his father where the religious festivals were being performed with due eclat. Standing face to face before the grand beautiful idol of the Mother of the Universe, the Brahmachari hit upon the idea, whether or not, the Divine Mother had manifested Herself in the image to accept the devotional offerings of the devotees and that if so, he liked to see Her as a living reality ; otherwise he should break the idol to pieces. Wonder of wonders ! the Mother was in a moment present before him, a reality, more living than the sensed objects, exquisitely beautiful,

ineffably sweet, infinitely loving and merciful. Her hands being lifted up in benediction. Presently, the Brahmachari fell in a trance, the luminous form of the Mother having entered into his body ; he came down, however, after a while to the normal plane of consciousness.

Gradually the Brahmachari sank deeper and deeper in meditation of the Self and contemplation about the frailties and futilities of the material world. At this time those who watched his movements testify to the fact that, not to speak of the period when he remained immersed in meditation and spiritual trance without the slightest body–consciousness, but even during his outward movements such as walking, bathing, taking food and physical exercise etc. he performed those habitually by his body and its limbs like a machine, but his mind was, all the time elsewhere, in the realm of the transcendental. At this period, he would be found to pick up the skull of his deceased young nephew (elder brother's son) from the crematorium and pass days and nights, in deep contemplation and discrimination of the unreality of the world.

Later in his life, he instructed his disciples in one of his letters that they could not expect to posses perfect discrimination (Viveka) and absolute dispassion (Vairagya) until the existence of this creation is finally lost in the ocean of forgetfulness through realisation of the Self.

A thoughtful observation of the early life of his Sadhana (Spiritual practice) would convince, even a man of common intelligence, that Brahmachari Binode was a born Yogi—a born realiser of the Self (Brahma) and an embodiment of discrimination (Viveka) and dispassion (Vairagya). This special feature was noticed only in the life of Acharya Shankara,—the Jagatguru.

THE HEROIC ATHLETE

Binode inherited a stout and strong physique. Unflinching continence and strict self–discipline made his body all the more strong and invincible. With the scanty diet of rice and boiled potatoes only, he took heavy physical exercise, with a pair of huge clubs, weighing one maund each, which he weilded five thousand times at a stretch. Thus he acquired uncommon strength. Physical exercise became part and parcel of his spiritual practice, so that during his meditations for long hours, whenever he felt tired and drowsy and his body and mind longed for relaxation, he would at once jump up, with his huge clubs and went on weilding them for sometime and then again he would sit down to dive deeper in spiritual trances.

His father, who found Binode to be couped up, day and night, in his thatch and to take rice and boiled potatoes only as his daily meal, could not believe that the boy possessed sufficient physical strength. But one day when the father saw Binode to lift up a huge log of wood which ten men could hardly raise, to set it aright for sawing, he was astonished beyond measure.

At the school the students would play at tug–of–war. Of the two rival groups of students, each requested Binode to lead it ; because the students all knew that the party that will fortunately get Binode as the leader would surely win. Binode would hardly join the fellow–boys in their play ; but sometimes when disputes arose amongst the players and from words the rivals came to blows, Binode would hurry up to the spot and stood between the warring parties like a veritable mountain and forthwith the quarrel stopped, each party gladly accepting the decision of Binode ; so dear was Binode to all that none liked either incur his displeasure or to sever himself from his benign companionship.

There are many incidents relating to the wonderful physical strength and prowess of Binode ; we would allude to a few only. Once some people were trying to pull out of water, a small boat to the bank of a streamlet, but were unable to do so for want of sufficient number of hands. By chance Binode was passing by, at that time. He was besaught to help them. Binode half reluctantly caught the boat and alone pulled it out of water to the surprise of the by–standers.

At Bajitpur, there was a Mahomedan ruffian who grew so daring that he would openly threaten the Hindus. The civil population of the village was always afraid of him. Binode intended to teach the rogue a good lesson in order to allay the terror of the villagers. One evening the man was passing while Binode was taking a stroll on the bank of the streamlet. Binode forthwith demanded of the man why he had the audacity to abuse and threaten the Hindu villagers ? Without being dismayed the man retorted that he would do it at his sweet will, without care and without fear. The Brahmachari, without any more remonstrance, caught the man in the twinkle of an eye by his legs and threw him down several steps off. The man saw that he had put his hands in the jaws of a lion, fell flat at the feet of the Brahmachari and begged of him pardon for his misdeed and was released only on condition that he would never in future commit such misconduct. This incident would throw a flood of light on the future nation–building career of the Brahmachari, when the Brahmachari stood in the fore front, as a builder of the nation, a social reformer and a saviour of the oppressed, persecuted and the down trodden masses ; he then organised village defence parties all over Bengal and successfully checked the depredations of the miscreants, the communal fanatics and the riot–mongers.

These incidents carried the fame of the physical strength and prowess of the Brahmachari to distant villages. On another

occasion several athletes who were proud of their own physical powers, came to the house of the Bhuinya and sought for an interview with his youngest son of whose physical strength they had heard so often. The Bhuinya pointed to them the thatch, inside which, the Brahmachari was sitting. The athletes knocked at the door and requested the Brahmachari to come out. At last he emerged out of his cottage and stood in front of the visitors. They besought him to show some proof of his physical strength. The Brahmachari refused, of course, to do so. But they went on imploring him again and again. Unable to rid himself of their importunites, the Brahmachari intrepidly caught those men, one by one, and threw them down in quick succssion. They were astonished and took leave of him with high compliments and respectful salutations.

One night while the Brahmachari was repairing to the solitary cremation ground to the seat of his meditation, he saw the house of a mahomedan villager on fire. He at once gathered some boys, ran up to the spot and set themselves to extinguish the conflagration. The Brahmachari himself was drawing water continuously for hours together by two huge pitchers in both of his hands and his fellow boys sprinkling it at his order by means of small pots, till the fire came under control.

Thus in the life of this ideal Brahmacharin we see physical strength, mental power and spiritual greatness wedded together homogeneously into a perfect, full–blown, unique personality. In him we realise the dream of Swami Vivekananda "Muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside dwelling a mind, as invincible as thunder bolt". The Brahmachari was in fact a glowing personification of "Brahma–Tejas plus Kshatra–virya".

Whenever in the history of India such a Divine personality appeared with such rare and unique combination of "Brahmatejas and Kshatravirya" "Dharma Samrajya" or "Ramrajya" the ideal

empire of universal peace and happiness was established on the Earth. The lives of Sri Ramchandra and Sri Srikrishna stand as the glorious instances of the same.

A FRIEND OF THE REVOLUTIONARIES

I have already mentioned that the Brahmachari was a veritable embodiment of heroism, of manhood and manliness. As such, he naturally sought in all sincerity and eagerness to rouse up the infinite energy latent in man—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—towards building up of national manhood and manliness. The Brahmachari from his own experience was convinced, beyond doubt, that every man is potentially a reservoir of infinite energy. All great men of the world knew this secret and as such they directed all their efforts and applied all means available to help men towards awakening and manifestation of the same. When the Brahmachari was quite young, a tremendous wave of patriotism, having its origin from the partition of Bengal, popularly known as the Swadeshi Movement, swept over Bengal, and side by side, a vigorous revolutionary movement was fast gaining ground. Secret societies were formed from district to district, from province to province and thousands of enthusiastic and energetic youths were enlisted. While Brahmachari was in the middle of his teens, many of his fellow students and adherents joined these secret societies and took active parts in the movement. The Brahmachari did not attach much importance to the efficacy of this sort of secret movement towards political emancipation of India. But he loved those youths very dearly and earnestly sought their welfare. He was always up and doing by his inspiring instructions as also by the instance of his own life and character, to awaken the sleeping lion in his friends, fellow students and adherents. His revolutionary friends took the Brahmachari into their confidence, thought him to be one of their party and made to him a clean breast of all their secrets. In crucial points they sought the decision of the

Brahmachari. During police search, they often surrendered their fire–arms to the Brahmachari. He carefully managed to keep these hidden off from the eagle–eye of the C. I. D. and the police. Thus the Brahmachari tried, as a real friend, to help the revolutionaries, in all possible ways, not only in building up of their moral life but also to get over the dangers and difficulties following in the train of their secret revolutionary activities.

As a natural consequence, the menacing eye of the police and C. I. D. fell upon the Brahmachari who was taken into custody by the police. Babu Ambica Charan Mazumder, one of the ex–presidents of the Indian National Congress, pleaded for the Brahmachari who remained in the jail where he stayed in his solitary cell, immersed in spiritual meditation, day and night. He was, however, acquitted and released in the course of a month.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE YOUTHS

I have already given hints that Brahmachari Binode, although he kept himself totally aloof from the touch of worldly people and affairs by physical and mental seclusion, was intensely particular about two things—(a) building up of the moral character and spiritual life of the youngsters, specially, the students who came in his touch in hundreds and thousands and (b) keeping active touch with social welfare works of various sorts.

The Brahmachari attracted, by his magnetic personality, youths of the neighbouring villages and students of different schools, who flocked round him, day after day, in increasing numbers. The Brahmachari's love and care for these boys was so deep, so sincere, so touching and his treatment so friendly, so kind and so sympathetic that any of them, the moment who came in touch with him would intuitively take the Brahmachari to be his greatest friend and well–wisher and confided to him his inmost secrets and opened to him the inner–most pages of the book of his heart. There

are hundreds of such persons living at present to testify to the infinite love, sympathy and kindness of the Brahmachari as guardian of the youths.

The Brahmachari gave them instructions how to build up moral character and spiritual life by observing the practice of Brahmacharya which lies essentially in controlling the mind and the senses and in preserving the vital fluid—the semen. He carefully imprinted, in the hearts of the youth "Semen is the vital energy ; semen is the elixir of life ; semen is energy crystallised ; semen is the nectar of immortality ; semen is the concrete form of manhood and manliness, nay, semen is Divinism". The Brahmachari pointed out to them the importance of continence in glowing words that a drop of semen is formed out of masses of food–stuff eaten and that as such to waste semen is to commit suicide. He reminded them of the scriptural motto that waste of semen is self–killing while preservation of the same is life immortal ; that chastity is life and sensuality is death. He inspired them with the immortal words of Lord Shiva—the God of Gods that no kind of penance is worth anything without Brahmacharya or continence which is the essence,—the summum bonum of all sorts of penances and spiritual practice, that the man who had become "Urdharetah,"—who had been able to fully absorb into his system this vital fluid, was no mortal being but the Lord Himself.

The Brahmachari instructed them to be strictly moderate in diet and sleep, as well as, to take plain and easily digestible food and warned them against taking substantial food or rich dishes on the plea of nourishment and put before them his own life as a glowing instance of the salutary effects of continence (Brahmacharya). He urged them to lead a life of discipline and impressed upon their mind that except in an orderly life, self–control and sense control and continence is impossible. The Brahmachari told them to practise concentration and meditation regularly and punctually and

to prepare a daily routine of works and to follow the same with the utmost care and precision. The Brahmachari stressed on regular physical exercise, as essential for building up of their physique, as well as, their character, reminding them of the oft–quoted saying "Sound mind in a sound body ; ill–health breeds ill–propensities."

The Brahmachari's exhortations to lead a life of chastity and purity had tremendous effect on the young hearts ; so much so that very soon an appreciable atmosphere of chastity and morality was created which gradually, grew into a vigorous movement in East Bengal.

This period was a golden age for East Bengal. About the time when hundreds of youths were being inspired by the dynamic touch of the human magnetism of the wonderful Brahmachari in the district of Faridpur, similar moral and religious movement was ushered into existence in the district of Barisal by the late reputed leaders Aswini Kumar Dutt, Jagadish Chandra Mukherji and Kalish Pandit. Thousands of enthusiastic youths with chastity of body and purity of mind, caught the fire of patriotism and selfless social service and proved their indomitable heroism and tactful ability, in all the fields of nation upheaval, by leading the political and social movements.

That the Brahmachari would in future stand as a nation–builder to save thousands and millions of the youths of the country from moral degradation and decay, was clearly evinced by the efforts, he made during his school life, in his native village, to teach and help hundreds of boys to build up their moral character through self–control and continence.

The Brahmachari's personal magnetism exercised such a deep impression in the heart of the boys and youths that they, in spite of all stubborn persuasions and repeated threatenings of the

guardians, could not resist the temptation of the Brahmachari's sweet and loving and elevating company. Often the Brahmachari himself would go to the house of these boys to instruct and inspire them. The boys and youths saw the reflection of their heart in the Brahmachari who intuitively solved, of his own accord, all their problems and difficulties. As such the boys and youths paid him greater tributes and considered him to be their greater friend and well–wisher than their own fathers, mothers or guardians.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Although passing most of his time in physical and mental seclusion, being almost unconscious or half–conscious of the world outside, the Brahmachari was wide awake to the miseries of the world and intensely particular about social welfare works. Behind his silent, quiet, grave, seclusive outward appearance, was hidden a heart full of the milk of human kindness that throbbed with sympathy for the most insignificant beings of the creation ; so much so, that from his very boyhood, he let slip no opportunity to work for the amelioration of the suffering humanity. In this way a band of good Samaritans grew up round him who were always ready to serve at his order. With the help of these enthusiasts, even in those early days of his life, he would try to mitigate the sufferings of the poor and distressed villagers.

He inspired his boys to go from door to door, on Sundays, to collect alms (Musti–Bhiksha) and to distribute the same to the poor and the helpless. These adherents of pure and sincere hearts naturally caught the fire of over–flowing sympathy and compassion of the Brahmachari. They would sit by the bed–side of patients seriously ill, night after night, to nurse them back to recovery. They would often gladly undergo village welfare works and cheerfully underwent troubles and tribulations to help the

villagers in dangers and difficulties. They did not hesitate to run risks with indomitable courage to chastise the wrong–doers who always sought opportunities to exploit or oppress the ignorant and helpless rustics.

This characteristic of the Brahmachari's early life furnishes us with secrets of his future philanthropic activities. Later in life, the Brahmachari, as a saviour of the poor, the persecuted and the down trodden masses of the land, came out with hundreds and thousands of his young enthusiastic followers to lay the foundation of the celebrated **Bharat Sevasram Sangha**—a spiritual brother–hood of selfless Sannyasins and volunteer workers and undertook to relieve people suffering from natural calamities, as well as from oppressions, persecutions and exploitations of the rich and the powerful, the cunning and the resourceful, the fanatic riot–mongers and the selfish miscreants—as we shall notice in course of his life–sketch.

The Brahmachari in a letter to his adherents and disciples wrote by way of inspiration to collect and knit up carefully together all the scattered individual forces into a great social power and thus relieve the poor and the depressed, save the helpless and the downtrodden, bestow peace and bliss on the heart of the people in sorrow and agony.

The Brahmachari had the heart of the Buddha and that of the Mahaprabhu Srichaitannya, blended together into a unique personality. His heart always bled for all, high and low, specially for those in the lower stages of the society, who were neglected and oppressed by the upper classes and exploited by the rich and the wicked. Later in life, as a social reformer, he made Herculean efforts to uplift the untouchable classes of the society and to put them on the same platform with the caste Hindus.

During his spiritual practice in his early life the Brahmachari would cordially invite the devotees from amongst the so–called lower class people and the untouchables and chanted, for hours together, the holy Name of the Lord in chorus with them in his lonely thatch.

Wherever he went or stayed, he made no difference in dealings with people from whatever rank they might come. He had to face untold dangers and difficulties, trials and vicissitudes from the orthodox bulk and the higher classes of the society, for his social welfare work, for uplifting the depressed (suppressed ?) and the untouchable humanity. His extra–ordinary love and care, for the Namasudras (1), the Rishees (2), the Pods (3), the Santals (4), the Dhupis (5), the Dhibars (6) and other lower class people and untouchables elicited envy and disgust, not only in the heart of the caste Hindus who harboured sworn enmity against the Brahmachari, but also in the mind of his own followers, even, who thought it a sort of excess.

A REVIEW OF EARLY LIFE

From what I have told of the early life of the Brahmachari in previous chapters, we may pick up some remarkable conclusions as viewed from various angles of vision :—

(*a*) Brahmachari Binode was a chosen instrument in the hand of the Providence ; to be more clear, the Almighty Will descended in the incarnation of the Brahmachari to fulfil a Mission for the emancipation of humanity. As such we notice from his very child–hood that as the Brahmachari grew in years, the intuition that

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(1) An untouchable but brave people ; (2) The untouchable cobblers ; (3) An agricultural class whose water was not taken by the caste Hindus ; (4) An aboriginal—untouchable ; (5) The washermen—an untouchable class ; (6) The fishermen—an untouchable class.

he was born with a Divine Mission, became more and more clear and pronounced within his ownself.

He was a born yogi, always drawn to the innerself like the great Shiva, the Lord of the Yogis. From his very boyhood, he was found an adept in meditation and contemplation like the great Buddha. His discrimination of the Real from the unreality, his complete dispassion for the transitory world–phantom, his glowing self–knowledge, his unflinching Brahmacharya naturally put him in the same platform with the Jagat Guru Acharya Shankara. His fathomless love, sympathy and compassion for the degraded, the distressed and the down trodden humanity and his life–long service towards their amelioration and uplift, reminds one of Srichaitanya, the Mercy–Incarnation of the Lord.

In his early life, the Brahmachari, in his letters and oral instructions to his followers inspired them, time and again, to cultivate the spirit of renunciation of the Buddha, the discrimination (Viveka) and dispassion (Vairagya) of Acharya Shankara and the love and compassion of Srichaitanya. In fact, his early life presented a harmonious blending of those world–revolutionising Divine personalities. Nay, it was more, as we shall see in course of his life–sketch, when later in life he appeared on the platfrom as a prophet of the age and a nation–builder. We were then charmed by the reflections, we saw in his kaleidoscopic personality, of Sri Ramchandra, Sri Krishna, the extirpators of the wicked and the Godless, the saviours of the rightous and inaugurators of the Dharma Rajya—Kingdom of Heaven.

(*b*) "Child is the father of the man" or "the morning shows the day"—go the proverbs. If we carefully follow the life and mission—the multifarious activities and achievements of the Brahmachari when he came before the nation as a full–fledged Acharya—a religious prophet, a social reformer and a

nation–builder, we easily recognise that all the remarkable features of his future career were exhibited more or less in a nutshell, in his early life.

(*c*) Spiritual aspirant, as in the case of most of the great spiritual Masters, for the period of their Sadhana (Spiritual unfoldment), retire to some solitary place, away from the din and bustle of the worldly life, having no concern with worldly affairs. The Brahamachari, although he passed most of his early life in spiritual seclusion, did neither leave off his paternal home for some lonely hermitage or mountain cave, nor sever himsself totally from social concern. He attended the school; took regular physical exercises, tried his utmost to help the boys to build up their moral character, occasionally participated in their play, chastised the wicked with an iron hand, helped people in distress and danger, supported the poor and the needy and organised the youths and infused into them a selfless mission of service to the society.

Later in life as the Acharya, he instructed those of his disciples who thought of leading a life of seclusion for spiritual practice, that the idea that spiritual realisation is not possible unless one retire to a secluded place away from the worldly affairs is absolutely wrong on the face of it. Referring to his own life he emphasised that mental seclusion is real seclusion. **The man, who enjoys mental seclusion by having perfect control over his mind, is really living in a mountain cave.**

(*d*) None can imagine a man without his body ; but nobody would, on that account, be prepared to take a dead body to be a man. Man is essentially the Spirit, the Self. But practically man is as much the body as he is the spirit. So, to all intents and purposes human life imports a comprehensive and synthetic existence—physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual.

So the life, in which is found a synthetic manifestation of powers—physical, mental, moral and spiritual, must be an ideal life. True nation–builders in India, in the proper sense of the term, had such a comprehensive and synthetic personality.

In the wonderful life of the Brahmachari, in his early days, we clearly notice such a harmonious development of strength—physical, mental, moral and spiritual. But this is not true in the case of most of the great spiritual Masters or religious prophets.

(*e*) Referring to the exalted personality of Sri Ramchandra the great poet Bhavabhuti says, "The heart of the Divine Incarnations is sometimes as invincible as the thunderbolt and is, at the next moment, as soft as the flower–petals. Who can make proper estimate of such a God–man ?" This was exactly true of our Brahmachari whose heart melted away at the sight of the slightest distress ; but still he would be found stern and adamant in punishing the miscreants. I have alluded to such an incident in his early life.

(*f*) The life of the Brahmachari illustrates, beyond doubt, the fact, as stipulated in the scriptures, that "Brahmacharya Sadhana"—self–control and continence, the concrete form of which is preservation of semen through control of mind and the senses, is the essence of spiritual practice ; nay, it is the key to the secrets of attaining strength and energy—physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual.

The Lord Shiva has instructed profusely in the scriptures about continence or Brahmacharya with the remark "What there is in Heaven and Earth, unattainable to a man who has completely conquered lust and has consequently fully controlled Semen—the vital fluid ?"

(g) The popular idea is that for spiritual realisation, the aspirant has to undergo certain mysterious type of penances, unpractical to or impracticable for ordinary people. In almost all the cases, the period of spiritual practice, in life of the great spiritual Masters, having been spent in seclusion, out of human sight or knowledge, the imagination of man has naturally cast a spell of mysticism over it.

But in the life of the Brahmachari, there is no room for mysticism or scope for imagination. The Brahmachari did not retire to any unknown mountain cave or lonely hermitage. He lived all along in his paternal home, in his own small thatch. He did not learn any mystic process of yoga from any spiritual master. His mind intuitively withdrew from worldly affairs and enjoyments and sank deeper and deeper in meditaiton and contemplation on the unrealty of the created things and beings and frailty of human existence. The course of spiritual practice which he undertook was **Self–control** and **self–discipline**. Perfect continence was his aim, to attain which he practised (*a*) **control of diet** (*b*) **control of sleep** (*c*) **control of speech** (*d*) **unflincing devotion to the principle and** (*e*) **discrimination and dispassion (Viveka, vichara and vairagya).**

That religion and spirituality do not consist in believing in certain creeds and dogmas and in performing certain rituals was amply illustrated by the life of the Brahmachari. However, creeds and dogmas and rituals have certainly their utility ; but these are not the essentials of religion or spirituality.

The course of spiritual practice which the Brahmachari followed was most practical, beyond any shadow of mysticism and fully practicable to all young and old, men and women. Bhajan, Kirtan, worship, japam, meditation, pranayama and all other kinds of spiritual practice is of no value at all to a man, if he does not exert

himself physically, mentally and orally to preserve semen the energy crystallised of the body and mind, through self–discipline and sense- control.

(*h*) Another idea in vogue amongst the young generation is that to sustain the body, substantial food in sufficient quantity is absolutely needed. More so, when one takes physical exercise. This idea is utterly misguided. The life of the Brahmachari is a glowing instance that proved beyond controversy, that in a pure and chaste life, simplest food composed of a quantity of rice and a few boiled potatoes is sufficient for the maintenance of health and strength of the body, although it accompanied by taking of regular physical exercise.

(*i*) That he would in future stand as a nation–builder and inaugurate a net–work of organisations to re–organise and re–construct the society and the nation, on the basis of its eternal ideals and principles, was indicated by the social service activities through his small association of boys in the early days of his life in his native village.

(j) With the Brahmachari, strength and heroism, manhood and manliness, in any form, were objects to be aspired after. These were in his opinion the highest merits. He maintained that religion, if it had any necessity at all, was to wake up and develop these rare merits. In his future career as an Acharya he thundered to the ears of his weak and inert countrymen **"Weakness, defeatism and cowardice are the greatest of sins ; heroism, manliness and manhood are the highest of merits".** The religion, that does not help to release in man, in his individual and social life, the fountain of infinite energy and strength, is no religion at all. Men ought to carefully keep themselves far away from this effeminate and enervating religious superistitions.

A SPARK TO THE EXPLOSION

At the age of seventeen in the year 1913 the Brahmachari completed his Brahmamcharya Sadhana and his body and mind became veritable spiritual Magazine or Divine power–house. The Almighty Will and the Divine mission, that began to unfold in the Brahmachari's life from his boyhood, had now reached almost its completion. The spiritual Magazine in the Brahmachari was full and ready for explosion. A spark was needed only to get the Magazine burst into a tremendous conflagration.

The Brahmachari who was uptill then, reluctant to seek initiation from any spiritual Master and did not feel its necessity at all, now impelled by Divine intuition, grew eager to get initiation—a spark from the burning spirituality. Accordingly he started with his Head Master, Biren Babu for Gorukhpur in U. P. to see the celebrated Yogiraj, Baba Gambhirnathji, of whom the Brahmachari himself told afterwards to his future disciples that his yogic powers were so great that he was almost omnipotent ; the Sun and the Stars would have been displaced from their respective orbits at his orders, if he so desired.

Baba Gambhirnathji received the Brahmachari with extra–ordinary kindness and regarding the question of initiation, he was surprised to assure the Brahmachari that he had been already at the pinnacle of spiritual unfoldment and needed no initiation. Pausing for a moment, the Yogiraj realised, with his insight, that the Brahmachari was no ordinary aspirer after spiritual salvation, but a chosen instrument of the Divinity, through which the Almighty Will was to work out its Providential plan for the good of the world. So recognising the glorious future of the Brahmachari, Nathji called the Brahmachari, with ineffable love and affection, to his side and gave initiation, which was but throwing a spark of blazing spiritual powers to the spiritual magazine in the Brahmachari.

The result showed itself then and there. From the very moment of his initiation, the Brahmachari lost his utward consciousness altogether and his Self dived deep into the ocean of the Absolute. He remained immersed in spiritual trances, day and night, in the thick bushes near about the Corukhpur Math, always unconscious of the world outside, careless about his food and other physical needs, even. It was Baba Gambhirnathji himself who would search him out from somewhere and then, in his half conscious state managed somehow to press a few morsels down his throat.

After some time, in obedience to the order of the Yogiraj, the Brahmachari went to Banaras where he took up his quarters in a lonely house at Asighat where he remained for some months, lost in Nirvikalpa Samadhi (merged in the Absolute). Later the Brahmachari told his disciples that at that time, through the inscrutable Will of the Supreme, an old lady appeared there to take care of him. This lady attended the Brahmachari, day and night and undertook various means to keep the physical existence of the Brahmachari in tact. During this period, Nathji would, often in his spiritual body, visit the Brahmachari to take proper care of his life and to instruct him about his next procedure.

When the paroxysm of Nirvikalpa Samadhi was over and the Brahmachari was placed in a lower plane of consciousness, on the threshold of super–conscious state, between the Absolute and the phenomenal, he felt an intuition to come back to his native place ; he stayed there for sometime, then he visited many places in East Bengal, nobody knew why. Then he again came back to his native village. On the bank of the little streamlet, not far from his paternal home, just opposite to the crematorium where he practised yoga trances in the night, there was a thick–grown jungle of wild trees. The place was annually innundated by the waters of the river Padma and remained submerged for nearly half the year. Due to the density of wild bushes, the place was so dark and fearful that

nobody ever dared to intrude into its sanctuary, except on the occasion of the congregational worship of "Bana–Durga"—the Divine Mother whose sacred altar was installed under a tree in the depth of the jungle.

The unique situation of this secluded plot of land (which though situated very near human habitation in the middle of the village was, to all intents and purposes, totally cut off from the locality) attracted the attention of the Brahmachari who, with the help of his close adherents, cleared a small plot in the middle of the jungle and raised it with earth above water–level and built a thatched cottage and installed his seat of meditation there.

Here in the year 1916 in the month of February, on the auspicious day of Maghipurnima, the Brahmachari with the help of his hundreds of followers and associates, organised a religious celebration. The new hermitage was reverberated, day and night, with incessant chanting of the Name of the Lord, by several groups of village devotees. The Brahmachari on that night sat under a "Kadamba" tree and entered into the great Illumination whereupon revealed to him, in details, the Divine Mission spread out before his Cosmic mind.

The spiritual spark which was thrown by the Yogiraj, Baba Gambhirnathji, in the Divine magazine of the Brahmachari and which was smouldering for sometime, was aflame on that memorable day and thence forward, as days passed and years rolled on, the flame of Divine Mission grew step by step brighter and brighter, to burn down the citadel of sins and crimes, of inequities and corruptions, of lust and mammon–worship, of coercion and persecution, of hypocrisy and injustice.

THE DIVINE BUILDER OF LIFE

Having had within himself on the blessed full moon day of the sacred Magha of Indian month in the year 1916, the full consciousness of the Divine Mission and a thorough realisation of himself being the chosen instrument of the Almighty Will, the Brahmachari was intuitionally raised to the exalted seat of the **Acharya**. Hence forward we shall mention the word "Acharya" in place of the word "Brahmachari" in referring to Brahmachari Benode, the Divine Builder—the Prophet of the Age—the representative of the Most High. Thence forward till the day he shook off his Earthly cage of bone and flesh, the Acharya, imbued with Godconsciousness, thought with prophetic vision, spoke with Divine conviction and moved with infallible steps. No opposition, however adamant could baffle him ; no threatening of grim circumstances, no red eyes of dangers and vicissitudes could retard his progress ; no denouncing vilification of criticism could make him pause and think ; no organised vandalism could make him deviate an inch from his principle or path. The Acharya appeared before the public, essentially as a builder of life—individual, social and national. But not as a leader or builder in the same sense, as the self–conceited leaders or builders of the present age, who stumple back at every step, as they face grim problems or crucial situation and cry for more light or repeat aloud for commiting Himalayan blunders, and yet have not the sincerity nor the manliness, to walk out to make room for other. The Acharya was leader of the people or buildler of the nation, in the same sense, in which Sri Ramchandra or Srikrishna or the Buddha or Acharya Shankara was counted a leader or builder—omniscient and infallible in thoughts, words or deeds.

RALLY OF SACRIFICING WORKERS.

The Acharya's life–mission having been Divinely predetermined, there were his own men, also, providentially earmarked, to carry on the same towards fulfilment. We have already seen, in our discussion of his early life that, attracted by his magnetic personality, boys and youths swarmed round him like the bees to a honey–comb. The Acharya had sincere love and sympathy for them all and tried his utmost for their physical, moral and spiritual welfare. Of these followers, associates and adherents, there were a few, whom he had recognised as his future apostles ; they were specially taken into confidence by him. He revealed to them, now and then, in fiery words of inspiration and prophecy the divinely dispensed future career of their life, as a dedication to the fulfilment of a divine mission and work to the well–being of the society and the nation. He would urge them to get themselves prepared, very soon, to shoulder the Cross—their respective God–ordained responsibilities.

Now as the time passed on his desire grew intense to properly train up first of all, his chosen lieutenants, who would dedicate their lives for realisation of his mission. He had been anxiously waiting for them with eager expectation. From amongst his early adherents, he had already picked up a few earmarked followers. Mainly with their help and assisted by some others, he first started humanitarian activities although in a small scale, in the surrounding villages. It was in connection with these social service activities that many enthusiastic youths began to flock round him at this time and amongst them were many pure sacrificing souls who were recognised by him to be his future apostles and they were warmly received and treated with special love and care by the Acharya.

HUMANITARIAN WORKS. E. B. CYCLONE RELIEF

In the year 1919, a terrible cyclone devastated the whole of East Bengal. Large relief measurers were organised by the East Bengal cyclone relief committee under the auspices of the then leaders of Bengal. The Acharya also with his little band of enthusiastic workers joined the activities and carried it on with admirable success. This cyclone relief work brought him before the public eye and some eminent leaders were attracted by his dynamic personality. He, of course, did not miss the opportunity but utilised the enthusiasm and active sympathy of the local people by setting up two social service centres at Madaripur and Khulna and named them **"Madaripur Sevashrama"** and **"Khulna Sevashrama"** respectively. Feeding the poor, nursing the sick, cremating the unclaimed dead bodies, helping people in distress, propagation of moral and spiritual ideas and ideals to the masses etc., were the principal objects of these Sevashrams.

KHULNA FAMINE RELIEF

Sometimes, good comes out of evil. In the year 1921, a devastating famine broke out in the district of Khulna (Bengal) and millions of people stood on the verge of starvation and death. The local district relief committee, with the help of the selfless workers of the Acharya started relief work, in a small scale, in the affected areas. The atrocity of the famine, being ventilated through newspapers, attracted sympathy and notice of the eminent leaders like the late renowned **Sir P. C. Roy** and others who, forthwith, organised a central Relief Committee at Calcutta and in co-operation with the district relief committee and the Acharya organised an elaborate relief operation in an enormous scale.

The Acharya with his little band of sacrificing youths stood at the helm. He laboured hard, day and night ; himself travelled from

village to village in East Bengal and gradually rallied five hundred energetic young men who earnestly volunteered their services to the cause. The work was carried on laudably for nearly a year, under the able and benign supervision of the Acharya whose fame now began to spread all over Bengal through the reports of these activities published in the newspapers. The then leaders like the late celebrated **Deshabandhu C. R. Das** and many other distinguished persons became his staunch admirers and assured him all possible assistance and co–operation in realisation of his contemplated plan.

Along with the hundreds of volunteers who served in the femine relief work, came a number of youths, so anxiously expected by the Acharya who were specially marked with their purity of heart dignity of character. They were fired with the spirit of renunciation, vows of life–long celibacy and selfless service of humanity. The Acharya easily recognised his chosen men out of these hundreds of youths and kept them under his loving care and watchful eye, advising them, now and then, to keep themselves aloof from their co–workers, as far as practicable. They, too, felt an inexorable personal attraction for the Acharya who seemed to them to be their nearest and dearest relative.

The Acharya, of course, would lose no opportunity from time to time, to snatch them away from their engagements and inspire them with glowing instructions on complete renunciation, absolute self–control and selfless service of humanity, as the easiest way, at the present age, of realising God—the Absolute, and thus to get beyond all sorrows and sufferings.

After the relief work had been over, almost all the volunteers went back to their respective homes, except the above–mentioned sacrificing youths who, electrified and attracted by the dynamic touch of the Acharya centered round him in order to dedicate themselves to the cause, undertaken by him. These young hearts

owing to their kindred spiritual sentiments were also attracted to one another with sincere love and brotherly feeling and looked as if they were of long previous acquaintance. The same ultimate goal—the Realisations of the Self—was before them all ; they were all actuated by the same object of selfless service to the humanity ; they were all determined to lead the life of celibacy ; sincere in heart and pure in character, they were all animated with soaring imagination and the blissful prospect of ridding themselves of the riddle of Maya (world phantom).

SPIRITUAL PILGRIMS TO THE SEAT OF THE GREAT ILLUMINATION

On the occasion of the holy Maghipurnima day, in the year, 1922, these young budding flowers set out for the "Siddhapitha" the blessed Altar of the Great Illumination of the Acharya at the Bajitpur Ashrama, to attend the anniversary celebrations of the Acharya and of the memorable day of his Great Illumination. Elated with untold felicitation, there young souls passed a couple of days on the way—revelling in spiritual fervour—now singing devotional songs, now chanting the Name of the Lord, then reading and discussing scriptural texts, again diving deep in meditaiton, then emerging out and indulging in the discussion of the prospects of their future spiritual achievements.

The party of spiritual pilgrims, at last, reached the beautiful hermitage of Bajitpur—the holy seat of the highest spiritual Illumination of the Acharya. It was covered with thick groves of trees, calm and serene, full of peace, bliss, amidst the picturesque rural surroundings, free from noise and turmoils of human habitation. The exquisite natural beauty and undisturbed quietitude and serenity of the hermitage played the part of a great incentive to the imagination of the divine aspirants after truth, swelling up their

spiritual emotion to a high level. Their sentiments were at once carried up to a higher plane where there was no sins and crimes, trials and tribulations, cares and anxieties of the world ; where existed only love and purity, selflessness and service of the suffering humanity ; where reigned supreme, peace and bliss, in all their grandeur.

In the field of relief activities they saw in the Acharya an indefatigable worker for the cause of suffering humanity and a friend and well–wisher of the youths ;—only two conspicous aspects of his mainfold life and character. Here in this penance–grove of Bajitpur, they saw him and experienced him from a new angle of vision. There the Acharya was shining in his own glory, encircled, as if, in a halo of Divine grandeur. He was, talking moving, guiding, instructing, supervising ; but still to a thoughtful observer, he would appear calm, serene and unmoved like the infinite ocean which remains unswelled and undisturbed, although hundreds of rivers enter into it with their vastness of water. * The young spiritual aspirants saw a concrete reflection of the ideal in the personality of the Acharya in whom was resplendently manifested, the ideal of a "**Sthitha Prajna**"—a man established in the consciousness of the Brahma or the Absolute. Such a superman works incessantly and indefatigable still he appears to do nothing ; just as the mother Earth moves on her orbit,

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*Divine peace and bliss is attainable by him only who amidst all the wordly enjoyments, maintains perfect equlibrium, like the ocan, which though watered by hundreds of rivers, remain undisturbed.—Geeta.

"कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते" —Even doing everything he incurs no bondage.

"कृत्वापि न निबध्यते" Although working, he is unattached.

नवद्वारे पुरे देहि

"नैव कुर्वन् न कारयन्" —Although living in the body and functioning with its senses, he himself does nothing, nor he desires others to do.

more than a thousand miles per hour, but to us she seems to be static. Such a great man performs everything by his mind and senses but his Self remains practically detached from the sensuous world, settled in trascendental consciousness.*

FIRST BATCH OF APOSTLES INITIATED IN THE VOW OF BRAHMACHARYA

. The Maghipurnima celebrations were going on with due eclat ; the incessant chanting of the scared Name of the Lord, reverberating through the sky and the air, created a tangible atmosphere of spiritual fervour. The young spiritual pilgrims underwent the necessary ritualistic ceremonies ; with their heads cleanshaved and going on fast, for the whole day and night, they congregationally performed the **"Upanayana Homa"** —sacrificial rites before initiation in the vow of Brahmacharya (Continence and celibacy) and endowed with the sacred thread as the symbol of the Spirit behind the body. They then clad themselves in white loin cloths and chadars, (wrapper convering the upper part of the body) awarded by the Acharya with his own hands. Thus the first batch of his apostles were dedicated to the cause of his five sacred conditions of the vow as follows :—

(i) I will never shake off from my heart the most sacred Mantram (ideal) of renunciation and sacrifice.

(ii) Never shall I leave this holy attire of a recluse nor shall I ever attempt to violate any rules of the Sannyasa–Ashrama (the life of renunciation) until I realise the Self.

(iii) Never shall I be a dupe to sensuality.

(iv) I shall devote myself always to the realisation of the One and the Immutable, through unflinching adherence to Truth.

(v) I will live a life of celibacy.

The Acharya uttered not a word but bathed the neophytes with his over–flowing benediction. They felt it and were transported with the felicitation of Divine inspiration. The newly initiated young Brahmacharins then came back to their respective 'Ashramas' at Khulna, Madaripur and Ashasuni where they again engaged themselves with their duties and responsibilities, this time with a settled mind and a define mission and God–ordained responsibilities.

The foundation stone of his Mission being thus laid, the Acharya now threw himself headlong in realisation of his plan. His activities became manifold. Now he was visiting the centres of activities, supervising and instructing the new Brahmacharins and workers about their works ; spending sleepless nights in teaching the newly initiated Brahmacharins about the ideals of their life and the principles of the vow of renunciation, inspiring them with hints on the bright prospects of their future career and clearing their doubts and disbeliefs ; next he would be going to Calcutta, meeting the leaders and distinguished citizens of the metropolis to convince them about his plan of work and to enlist their sympathy and support. During this time, he had to labour hard ; he walked on foot from one end to the other of the city of Calcutta for collection of funds from house to house. In Calcutta, he had no fixed place to lay his head in. He worked the whole day, living on whatever small quantity of food, he got as a guest to some gentleman's house. He had to pass his nights without food. The Acharya had thus to visit, by turn at short intervals, the Ashramas at Bajitpur, Khulna, Madaripur and Ashasuni and also to work in various roles at Calcutta.

THE BRAHMACHARINS' FREEDOM IN LIFE BUILDING.

The young new Brahmacharins were outwardly left to their own to enjoy full freedom, as regards their works at the centres and also their individual spiritual practice. They observed

congregational prayers early in the morning, at noon and in the evening ; but followed, each in his own way, their individual way of spiritual practice. The omniscient Acharya who had at his finger's end their inner–most merits and demerits, acquired by them through numerous births and deaths, and who saw also the picture of their future spiritual progress and achievements, did not, as such, disturb the free growth of their life by bindings of any hard and fast rules and regulations. He, however, prescribed certain broad and general rules of conduct for the Brahmacharins and left the detailed functioning of those upon their own discretion. These new Brahmacharins and many others that followed, next, were born with uncommon spiritual merits. The Acharya knew that their merits will make their own way onward towards realisation of the Self ; and what was necessary was just to put them in a favourable atmosphere under salutary conditions and that was just what the Acharya was arranging.

The Acharya always attempted at fanning, brighter and brighter, the flame of renunciation in the heart of his spiritual children and whetting their power of discrimination. He imprinted upon their receptive mind, the necessity of self–discipline by leading a routine life ; so that a single second of the valuable time of their life might not be lost in vain. The young Brahmacharins caught the fire and adopted, each in his independent way, a course of self–discipline, with a daily routine of successive duties and responsibilities. The Acharya always dealt with the broad ideas and outlines of self–control and did not meddle with the details but would leave them to their own selves.

NORTH–BENGAL FLOOD RELIEF WORK AND INFLUX OF DEVOTED WORKERS

Meanwhile there happened another woeful incident, in connection with which more sacrificing workers came in touch

with the Acharya and finally dedicated their lives to his Mission. In the year 1922, the entire North Bengal was deluged by an unprecedented flood, causing wide devastations. Of course, North Bengal Relief Committee was organised under the auspices of Sri P. C. Roy and the prodigious relief operations were conducted under the able management of the celebrated Subhas Chandra Bose. The Acharya was not lagging behind and readily lent his quota of service with the help of his band of selfless Brahmacharins and workers. They worked from several centres for nearly a year. This time also, the Acharya enlisted many volunteers of whom some, having been animated by the ideals of sacrifice and selfless service, eagerly accepted the ideal of the Acharya and became his devoted followers. After the flood relief work was over, the Acharya started another permanent centre "**The Uttar Banga Sevashram**" at Naogaon and "**Students' Home for spiritual culture**" at Rajashahi.

ANOTHER BATCH OF SACRIFICING YOUTHS INITIATED INTO THE VOW OF BRAHMACHARYA

In connection with the activities, the number of sacrificing and devoted workers was gradually swelling up and on the holy Maghhipurnima day in the year 1923, another big batch of youths dedicated themselves to the Mission of the Acharya by embracing the life of renunciation and the vow of Brahmacharya. Now the Acharya had at his disposal quite a good number of devoted workers with the help of whom his organisational activities rapidly increased in magnitude, as well as, in variety. True, the workers as well as the work, both were on the wax, day by day ; but the workers had to be remodelled after the pattern of the life and character of the Acharya.

TACTFUL HANDLING OF THE YOUNG TURBULENT SOULS THROUGH LOVE AND FREEDOM

The new Brahmacharins, of course, accepted the Acharya, as their leader and paid him respect. But their inner selves were not yet raised to such a spiritual altitude as to recognise the Divinity in the Master ; consequently they were not, till then, prepared to accept him as their Guru and resign themselves to the mercy of the Acharya, quite unconditionally. The Acharya remained, outwardly, unconcerned and allowed them full freedom ; just as a clever fisherman, having angled a large fish, allows it for some time, to run to and fro, before pulling it finally out of water. The Acharya exercised, unnoticed, his silent but inexorable spiritual power over them all, in the form of his unbound love and affection and parental care and attention. The Acharya played with his neophytes, as a master wrestler who, in his tussles with the novice wrestlers, owns defeat, every now and then, only to let them grow in strength and acquire mastery in the art. The Brahmacharins were convinced that they were following their own path of idealism and they were actually rowing on and on, their own boats of spiritual conception and practice, scarcely noticing that the Acharya himself was at the helm and was carefully turning them quite imperceptibly ; so that at the end of the period of a couple of years, they wre surprised to find themselves anchored at the harbour of the mercy of the Acharya and of his Divine Mission. The Acharya had to spend, much of his time and energy, to tame these young turbulent souls, most of whom where fresh from the colleges and had drunk deep the Western Culture and were consequently greatly conceited of their individuality. The Acharya waited and watched with unswerved patience and unfathomed forgiveness. Freedom reigns where unconditional love exists ; this the Brahmacharins experienced in the Divine company of the Acharya.

THE BRAHMACHARINS GRADUALLY CONVINCED OF THE OMNISCIENCE OF THE ACHARYA

The Acharya was omniscient and had, at his finger's end, the past, present and future of his spiritual children ; but he dealt with them with his spiritual magnanimity concealed, as if he was one of them. But the Brahmacharins, whenever they came before him, felt unconsciously that the Acharya would have been penetrating with his eyes, into the innermost recesses of their hearts and knowing everything and as such all their doubts and queries automatically vanished before him. Sometimes they would wonder to hear the solution of the problems or answers of the questions that had been agonising them for months or years together, with pricking pain. Thus the Brahmacharins, who experienced the reflection of their mind in the cosmic mind of the Acharya, were gradually convinced of his omniscience.

THE TURBULENT SOULS WERE ENTRAPPED IN THE SNARE OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

By far the most turbulent and bigotted of the Brahmacharins was one who while he had been working under the Acharya in the Khulna famine Relief work, was thus entrapped. Once when the Acharya was suffering from serious illness and tossing on his bed, impatiently and with pitiful groanings, the said Brahmachari questioned within himself what sort of man was he ? Grave doubts arose in his mind and he argued within himself that if he (the Acharya) had been spiritually elevated, then why would he be groaning in agony ? That real spiritual men would be above body–consciousness and as such they could easily overcome physical illness or remian unperturbed in spite of it. No sooner this sort of argument flashed across the mind of the said Brahmachari, then the Acharya at once became clam ; all his paroxysms of illness stopped and he lay still in his bed for sometime without any

movement of his limbs ; then staring at the face of the said Brahmachari, uttered significantly that the great Buddha and the great Acharya Shankara had to suffer from such diseases ; Mahapurabhu Sri Chaitannya Deva would have been attacked with the same sort of illness. The Brahmachari was astonished beyond measure and thought that was then the Acharya, whom he had taken for an ordinary spiritual aspirant, really a man of Realisation ? That, could he read the depths of human mind ? That otherwise how could he answer to the unuttered questions of the Brahmacharin's mind ? The Brahmachari from that day made up his mind to stick to the company of the Acharya and watch and scrutinise him to find whether the Acharya was just the type of the spiritual Master, he had been seeking after. The argumentative youth, who thus came to test the Acharya, was at last swayed away unconsiously, by the boundless love, care and forgiveness of the Acharya and was firmly convinced of his omniscience, by his daily experience at every step.

Men often express their astonishment at the occasional demonstrations of omniscience in the life of renowned sages and seers and extol them with highest tributes. But in our Acharya we noticed that his omniscience was most natural and normal, easier than life–breath, even. So that however tormented by grave doubts and horrible misgivings and tossed by serious questions, one might have been, as soon as he came in the presence of the Acharya, he would find his mind and heart free from troubles and anxieties and full of hope of encouragement having scarcely anything to ask, the questions being unwittingly answered or the problems automatically solved, in course of conversation or by his sincere and loving treatment. The Brahmacharins would individually see and feel, in their daily life that their innermost thoughts, and ideas, feelings and sentiments were often quite naturally reflected in the words of instructions or encouragement and in the affectionate care and attention of the Acharya.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF THE BRAHMACHARINS TOWARDS THE ACHARYA

Although the young Brahmacharins had little conception of the spiritual personality of the Acharya and as such they could not, till then, accept him as their spiritual Master, they had natural and unostentious love and attraction for the Acharya ; just as a child, who does not know or has little care for the greatness or merits or qualifications of his parents, is naturally attracted towards them, as his nearest and dearest ones. The Acharya too carefully concealed his transcendental personality and behaved with each of them, according to his merits and sentiments. So that each of his spiritual children believed and felt that he was loved most by the Acharya.

SPIRITUALITY IS NOT ACQUIRED BUT IS TRANSMITTED TO DISCIPLE BY THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

"Spiritual knowledge—knowledge of the Self—is obtainable neither by logical arguments, nor by penetrating intellect, nor by vast knowledge of the Scriptures. Self is knowable to those only, to whom He graciously reveals Himself". It is also said in the Scriptures that the man who has realised the Brahma—the Absolute, has himself become an embodiment of the Brahma or the self. Spiritual unfoldment depends ultimately upon the mercy of a seer—the Realiser of the Brahma. To be more clear and precise, spirituality is not acquired ; it is transmitted from the Guru—the Spiritual Master—to the disciple—the devoted spiritual aspirant ; just as electricity is transmitted from the dynamo to the lights and fans etc, and serves our manifold purpose in various forms. In fact electricity is present everywhere in the world ; but we cannot utilise the same until we get some connection with the dynamo where it has been actually stored and deposited. Similarly, God—the Absolute and the Infinite—is immanent in the creation, in every thing and every being ; but we cannot see or realise Him. To

realise Him we must surrender ourselves unconditionally to the Guru or the Realiser of the Absolute and have uninterrupted connection with him, through unflinching devotion and absolute self–resignation. So it has been declared in the Shastras—(Scriptures) that the spiritual Master always shines in his own spiritual magnanimity, as a silent interpreter ; while the disciples have their spiritual knots cut, in his benign presence.

The truth of the scriptural texts were fully illustrated in the life and conduct of the Acharya. We have already marked that in his early life, he was very particular about control of speech. In fact, he talked but very little ; that too in such a low voice that it was audible only to the man with whom he spoke and not to any body else, even if he might be the next adjacent man. No unnecessary word ever passed out of his lips. Later in life also, the Acharya utterly disliked talkative habits. He himself did never talk of or discuss about God or Self or life hereafter and all those theological or metaphysical questions. Not only so, he did not even allow his followers to talk of or discuss about such things amongst themselves. In the preparatory stages, he did not even tolerate reading of any scripture, except that of the Geeta, by the new Brahmacharins. He sternly denounced talk and discussion and reading as the greatest impediment (in the primary stages) in the path of spiritual unfoldment. He would impress upon the mind of his disciples that spiritual progress depends entirely upon the mercy of the Guru or the spiritual Master, on whom the entire attention of the disciples ought to be concentrated ; and in proportion it is so done, so much the spiritual progress is ensured. Once the Acharya had been away from the Calcutta Head Office for some time. He wrote a letter to his disciples at Calcutta in which he intimated the date of his arrival at Calcutta. The disciples prepared food for him and attended the Railway Station to receive him for several successive days. The Acharya for some reason could not come. He

came quite surprisingly on the day when none of the disciples were at the Station. They complained why he did not intimate his date of arrival. The Acharya admonished them why not the desciples did catch each and every thoughts and sentiments as soon as it arose in the mind of the Acharya ?

But unswerved devotion and resignation to the spiritual Master is attained not by reading of the Scriptures, nor by hearing of philosophical discussions, nor by metaphysical contemplations, not even by austere penances, but by serving the Guru by thoughts, words and deeds ; just as nourishment is not available to the man who writes treatises after treatises on milk but to the person who drinks it, although he might not have knowledge about the properties of milk. Serving the Guru unflinchingly by thoughts, words and deeds, is practicable only when unconditional love and devotion actuates the same. It was for this reason that the Acharya, instead of imparting philosophical or metaphysical instructions to his young disciples, sought to draw their hearts to himsef by his love and forgiveness, boundless and unconditional ; which, in course of a few years, had its tremendous effect and was reciprocated by the spiritual children by self–resignation, love and devotion. Then and then only the transmission of the Acharya's spiritual power and will, became an accomplished fact.

THE YOUNG BRAHMACHARINS' PLANS AND IDEAS REECHOED IN THE WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE ACHARYA.

The Acharya would never denounce the demerits and weaknesses nor disturb the ideas and inclinations of his disciples ; on the contrary, the followers would be astonished and transported with endless felicitation to find their dear but secret ideas and plans of work, often reechoed in the Acharya's words of encouragement.

In this way, some Brahmacharins who had rural uplift work as his hearts' desire, got impetus towards the same.* Some others who cherished, from their boyhood, the desire for realising the ancient Gurukul system of education, were encouraged to start "Brahmacharya Vidyalayas" ;† another who had dislike for social service activities and longed for a life of seclusion for spiritual practice, was elated with joy to hear the Acharya say in a voice of sweet consolation. "We are Sannyasins ; this social service activities are not for us ; we have accepted it temporarily to leave these off at any moment. I shall build up a hermitage on the hills of Gaya where those who desire to lead a secluded life of spiritual practice will be allowed to do so.

The Non–violent Non–co–operation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi had, at that time, been tossing the entire population of India with its tremendous waves ; and the leaders as, well as, the masses were equally swayed away by the onrush of the movement. The young Brahmacharins, who would, at that time, go out to preach their spiritual ideals from place to place, often had to face vehement opposition. Political leaders and enthusiasts would discourage them saying "Gentlemen do you know that we have been living in an age of science and politics ? Do you mean to take the nation back to the palaeolithic age—some five thousand years behind ? The ideals of the Vedic Age will not help us in the least. Don't you see the world–revolutionising political movement of the Mahatma ? Leave off your utopian ideas and just join hands with us all."

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* several centre of village constructive works were started in the district of Khulna, free primary schools and charitable dispensaries were started and weaving and cane–work and other cottage industries were introduced amongst the poor masses.

† Two such institutions were founded at Khulna and Madaripur respectively where along with University education, the students would get a sound moral and spiritual training towards a harmonious growth—physical, mental, moral and spiritual.

THE ACHARYA'S INFALLIBLE DIRECTION TO HIS DISCIPLES

Discouraged and dejected, the young Brahmacharins once returned to the Acharya with serious doubts and disappointment in their heart. On hearing the details from them, the Acharya flared up with Divine fire and tore off the darkening clouds of their mental horizon by thundering voice—"Breathes there any man who can realise the problems of the social and national life of India ? Could the leaders who have always been to tossing, hither and thither, on the crest of the waves of their selfish ends and carnal desires, who have always been rolling and dalling in the mud–pool of sensual propensities, dictate paths out of the labyrinth of national problems ? If there be any omniscient seer like the illustrious Vyasa. Vasitha, Valmiki, if there be any omnipotent Divine personality like Buddha, the Acharya Shankara or the Mahaprabhu Srichaitanya Deva, it is he only who can and will chalk out the sure path for the people to follow for national emancipation. The leaders who are being idolised to-day will be thrown away in course of time like any thing. Don't disturb yourselves with these trivialities ; but just gird up your loins to implicitly follow the path, shown to you ; time will come when you will see the whole nation following your foot prints." Thus the disciples were inspired back to their normalcy with redoubled faith and resignation by the glimpse of the superhuman spiritual personality and the prophetic vision of the Acharya.

THE FALSE IDEA OF LIVING IN SECLUSION FOR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE DENOUNCED

Some of the disciples, who were deeply read in the literatures of the Ramkrishhna Mission, had contracted the idea of living in seclusion in some lonely, hermitage, during the first stage of spiritual practice, from a book "Sri Ramkrishna Kathamrita"—(the

nectar like words of Sri Ramkrishna) in which the idea has been illustrated by a simple that just as milk is prepared into card in a lonely place and then butter is taken out of it by churning ; in the same process, the spiritual aspirants, must, in the first stage of spiritual life, live away from the din and bustle of the world and practice spiritual exercises in solitary place ; just as milk mixes with water but butter, which is a preparation of milk, does not, so also, spiritual aspirants, when they would become adepts by carrying on their spiritual exercises in seclusion, might later on be able to remain unsoiled in company with people in the world.

Possessed by this idea, they naturally had great longings for a secluded life of spiritual practice. The Acharya, who saw through the misguided idea of their mind, strongly deprecated it saying that the idea that spiritual progress is not possible until and unless one retires to seclusion in a mountain cave, is utterly mistaken on the face of it ; that many promising spiritual aspirants, under that false idea, took recourse to solitary retirement and in the long run saw that they had lost whatever they had and thus disappointed, were compelled to return home with their spiritual life completely spoiled. He convinced his young followers with emphasis on the point that wherever they would go, the mind that is always tossed and tormented by worldly desires and carnal propensities, would, all along, be with them. He finally imprinted upon their heart the conviction that a mind, calm and fully controlled, is the veritable mountain–cave where real seclusion reigns.

DISCIPLES IN SPIRITUAL ORDEALS ENCOURAGED AND ASSURED OF BRIGHT FUTURE

Seriously troubled by mental struggle, one of the Brahmacharins wrote with a lacerated heart to the Acharya that undesirable thoughts and evil propensities had been prevailing upon him, hurling him into the depth of spiritual defeatism. The Acharya

consoled him in a letter asking him not to be dismayed by those impediments which would not last long. The Acharya also assured him that he was one of the chosen pure souls whose life would be protected by the Almighty Himself and that realisation of the Eternal, if it had been possible for any body, would surely be materialised in his life also, if only he could but obey the Acharya with unflinching devotion.

In another of his inspiring letters, the Acharya asked one of his disciples to shake off procrastination and shoulder the responsibility, of materialising the Mission of the Acharya and demanded of him to be confident of his spiritual potentiality. Another disciple who, while he had been suffering illness, was labouring hard for collection of contributions from door to door, in spite of his physical ailments, was encouraged by the Acharya who told him emphatically that spiritual salvation was ensured for him, even if he died on the foot–path, in his attempt to collect money for maintenance of the activities of his Mission. In a letter to the same Brahmacharin, the Acharya revealed to him that the sacred blood of hundreds of selfless sacrificing Sannyasins like him was necessary to shed drop by drop to wash off the age–long heaps of sins and crimes of the nation. It was he and others following in his suit who, being seated in the glorious position of the ancient Aryan Sages, would show to the misguided people, the true path for national emancipation, trumpetting into the ears of the countrymen, the ideals of renunciation, self–discipline, truth and continence.

Another young Brahmacharin was disillusioned and made confident, in a letter of the Acharya, of his future glorious career, as the spiritual teacher, heriocally preaching the messages of the Mission of the Acharya to the people throughout the length and breadth of India.

Another Brahmacharin was inspired by the Acharya in a letter in which he wrote that thence–forward the Goddess of knowledge (Saraswati) will take possession of his intellect and that whatever he would think or write or say would be as invincible and infallible as the words of the Vedas.

In this way, the Acharya had been awakening the sleeping lions in his future apostles and entrusting on them greater and greater responsibilities of his Mission. In this connection, he wrote to one of his disciples that success is sure to the man of undeviated determination, and he is a man in real sense of the term who does not flinch an inch from his attempt to materialise his plan but heriocally lays down his life for the cause. He wrote further that man has an infinite reservoir of energy in him and it was the adamant determination to carry out the responsibility, entrusted on a person. that his latent energy is gradually released.

THE ACHARYA'S OMNISCIENCE REVEALED IN HIS WARNING TO THE BEGUILED CHILDREN.

The Acharya had also to labour hard for correcting his beguiled children, who, under false impression, contracted from undesirable persons, had been going astray in spite of repeated warnings and in the attempt the Acharya would often allude to his own spiritual greatness and omniscience. In a letter to one such Brahmacharin, the Acharya regretted that his life was quite safe and progressive, so long as he had been a blind follower of the Acharya ; but that the day, he thought himself to be independent, his life had been a prey to many ills. The Acharya also warned him that the moment he would think that he had no connection with the Acharya and his Mission, he would be thrown helplessly into the abyss of spiritual degradation. In this letter, in his final attempt to illumine the clouded intellect of his misled child, the Acharya revealed his identity by saying that the renowned saints and spiritual Masters,

would hardly, have dared to disobey him (Acharya) whose instructions, he had been easily neglecting ; that had there been any man of Realisation, he, only, would know whether or not the Acharya as omniscient and had at his fingers' ends, the past, present and future. On another occasion when the young disciples who could not always assimilate the ideas of the Acharya, repeatedly expressed their unwillingness to undertake some of his proposed work, the Acharya blazed up in an exalted mood and admonished them saying "Stay or walk out as you like ; I didn't invite you here ? I shall carry out the Mission, entrusted upon me by the Almighty, infusing life and energy, into the clay models, even if it needs so."

THE ANCIENT VEDIC IDEALS

The Acharya desired to reinstate the ideals of the Vedic age and build up the foundation of his Missions on the same. In the glorious days of Hinduism in the Vedic age, every Aryan boy, from a prince to a cultivator, had to live in the hermitage of the Divine spiritual Master, to build up his life and character, under his divine guidance and supervision. There the boys would live the life of plain–living and high–thinking, amidst the calm and quietitude of natural surroundings. The student disciples would found in the Master, the loving father, as well as, the affectionate mother. Drinking deep the divine disinterested love and affection of the Master, the disciples always attempted at reciprocating the same by serving him with implicit obedience to his orders. Academic education was not then the thing of first importance. A harmonious development of strength—physical, mental, moral and spiritual, was the main object. As such the disciples had to undergo various sorts off discipline—physical, mental and moral. In proportion as the disciples progressed in self–control and continence and in an unconditional self–resignation to the Master, his powers and

knowledge being transmitted through that channel, would strengthen and illumine the devoted souls.

The Acharya, who was eager to help his young apostles to develop their budding spirituality by transmitting into them his own spiritual powers, had thus to arrange suitable collocations and create a favourable atmosphere and wait patiently with his unfathomed love and affectionate care, till he got the desired reciprocation.

DISCIPLES WORSHIP THE ACHARYA AS AN INCARNATION OF GOD.

The young hearts were being gradually drawn, unconsciously, towards the Acharya for years together ; at last in the year 1924 on the full–moon day in the month of November, the Acharya revealed to a few of his disciples, his identity as the chosen representative of the Supreme Divinity—the Prophet of the Age—and was duly and ceremoniously worshipped. We learn this from the description, given by one of the young disciples, as follows "From January 1924, I felt a sudden change in my mental constitution, so much so that all my prepossessed thoughts and ideas were speedily vanishing before the new illuminating thoughts and ideas that were gradually evolving out of intuition ; along with that I felt, stronger and stronger, my attraction for the Acharya. Towards the end of February, I was called to stay in the hermitage at Madaripur, in company with the Acharya. There living continously for several months in touch with the Master, I became so much attached to the Acharya, that separation from him for a few hours even, was simply unbearable to me ; just as a suckling child is unwilling or unable to live away from its mother. On the day before the full–moon in the month of November, I was over–whelmed with a vision which hovered over me, day and night, with equal brilliance. Wherever I cast my eyes or whenever I tried to meditate

with my eyes closed, I saw that the Acharya was sitting on a beautiful throne within a circle of Divine halo and grandeur ; round him, the gods were worshipping him and singing hymns in his praise and people on the Earth had been anxiously craving and praying for his mercy. I, who had been once so much sceptic and bigotted, could not help worshipping him as an incarnation of the Supreme."

The incident was a turning point in the history of spiritual evolution of the Acharya's "Mission". From that memorable day, the Acharya changed his attitude. The young Brahmacharins were habituated to see the Acharya as one of them—their leader and guide. But thenceforward, he raised himself formally to his glorious position of the Acharya or the Prophet of the Age and demanded of his disciples to regard him as the representative of the Lord, not only in thoughts and ideas, in meditation and contemplation, but also in all outward respects, in words, manners and personal services. From that day, the Acharya began to be ceremoniously worshipped thrice daily by all the Sannyasi disciples in a body. The disciples had, thence forward, to change totally their dealings with the Acharya. The Acharya, by this Divine exalted attitude, created a wholesome atmosphere of spiritual fervour and devotional sentiments whereby, self–surrender for the followers became imperative and natural, and the disciples began to be convinced of the fact that the Acharya was their all—their father, mother, friend and well–wisher ; nay, to be blessed with his grace and mercy was the highest of their spiritual achievements.

Thus the Divine Mission which had its inception in the holy full–moon day in the year 1916 at the altar of the Divine Illumination of the Acharya at the hermitage of Bajitpur and which had its first batch of apostles, dedicating their lives in the year 1922 and which was being nurtured and gradually shaped, in the

subsequent period, under the salutary atmosphere of heavenly love and affection, care and forgiveness and was guided by the spiritual omniscience of the Acharya, developed by the year 1927 into full–grown manhood with all its limbs sufficiently strengthened to manifest itself in its real nature before the nation.

In the next chapter, we shall see how the Acharya, organised his Mission—the **Bharat Sevashram Sangha** and founded it on a sound footing by internal and external discipline, himself standing at the centre as the life and soul of the Sangha, the Sangha being a vast living organism, at it were.

THE DIVINE BUILDER OF THE SANGHA

The Mission of the Acharya included three distinct aspects—life building, Sangha–building and Nation–building. The three aspects of the Mission are being separately dealt with in successive chapters ; but really speaking those three aspects are inseparable from one another, being harmoniously interwoven.

IDEOLOGY BEHIND THE NAME "BHARAT SEVA-ASHRAM SANGHA"

In the year 1923 on the auspicious Maghipurnima day, in a gathering of the Brahmacharins and sacrificing workers, in the hermitage of Bajitpur, the epithet "Bharat Sevashram Sangha" was suggested and adopted by the Acharya as the appropriate denomination of his Organisation. The ideology behind the epithet, as explained by the Acharya was as follows :—The word "Bharat" indicates that the Sangha's primary object is emancipation of the Indian people on the basis of its eternal ideals ; the work "**Seva**" imports the idea that the Sangha, includes those who are true servants of the nation and who have dedicated their lives to the service of the people—physical, mental, moral and spiritual ; the word "**Ashrama**" will at once suggest the ideals of the ancient "**Varnashrama**" system which was based and disciplined on the ideals and practice of renunciation, self–control, truth and continence ; "**Sangha**" means organisation ; the "Sangha" will be a living organism, the Acharya himself being the life and soul and all the sacrificing and devoted children being its different limbs ; the Sangha through its ideals and practice will infuse an organisational spirit amongst the disintegrated masses, towards building up of a well–compact and powerful nationality.

Thus within the name of the Sangha was included, in a nut-shell, the aims, objects and ideals of the Sangha.

INITIATION OF THE FIRST BATCH OF BRAHMACHARINS INTO "SANNYAS".

In December 1923, the Acharya embraced "Sannyas" by performing scriptural ceremonies and became "acquainted by the name Acharya Swami Pranavanandaji". In February 1924, the first batch of the Brahmacharins were initiated into the institution of "Sannyas"—by the Acharya himself. The scriptural institution "Naishthika Brahmacharya"—prescribes ideals and practice of renunciation and continence as preparations for "the Sannyas" or complete renunciation towards realisation of Self and selfless service of the world. As has been discussed before, the Acharya was recognised, accepted and worshipped, as the Prophet of the Age by his Sannyasi and Brahmachari followers in November, 1924. In the same year, the Acharya undertook another memorable programme of work—"Tirtha–Sanskara"—Reform of the Holy places of the Hindus and laid the foundation of the hermitage of Gaya. The subject will be dealt with in connection with the nation–building activities of the Sangha.

SPREAD OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SANGHA AND SOURCE OF INCOME.

As years rolled on, the activities of the Sangha progressed, by leaps and bounds, with the increasing number of its sacrificing workers. We have already mentioned the establishment of several Ashramas with varieties of activities at Madaripur, Khulna, Asasuni, Naogaon and Rajshahi. In 1922, we saw the Calcutta office situated in a hired thatch ; in 1923 it was removed to a two–roomed flat in a house at Shovabazar ; in 1924 it was housed in a big hall at the Bowbazar Street. By this time the Sangha had to

maintain four centres of various humanitarian activities, two Brahmachary Vidyalayas, three cottage industry centres, a dozen of free primary schools, two charitable dispensaries, many centres for religious and cultural propaganda and one pilgrim centre at Gaya ; consequently, the Sangha had to labour under huge expenditure ; but up till then it had no permanent source of income. The Sangha was, all along, entirely dependent on voluntary contributions from the public. The Acharya was always against acception of any conditional gifts. He had, throughout his life, been unflinching in his principle. He did not on principle accept funds raised by charity–shows of Cinemas or dramatic performances ; the Sangha has still today been strictly maintaining this principle determined by the Acharya for its guidance.*

The Acharya discovered by his illuminating intellect a permanent solution of the money–problem of the Sangha. He gradually organised in the year 1924 several preaching parties each consisting of a dozen of enthusiatic youths including some Sannyashins and Brahmacharins of the Sangha. These preaching parties would daily go, from door to door, in towns, as well as, in villages, to preach the ideals and objects of the Sangha and also to collect voluntary contributions in coin or in kind. This new creation of the sweeping intelligence of the Acharya developed several fundamental traits and served manifold purposes of the Sangha as hinted below :—

(a) It served as a regular and systematic process of propaganda of spiritual, moral and religious ideas and ideals from door to door ; (b) the monks of the Sangha, if they live and move alone, are, often,

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The Acharya could not bear the idea that funds towards maintenance of activitised of national amelioration should, instead of being charity of benevolence and patriotism, be raised by cinema shows or dramatic performances by tickling the unmanly spirit of luxury and frivolity of the countrymen.

amidst trials and temptations, liable to fall off from their ideals and break their vows. Preaching Parties offered opportunity for them to work in a body, living amidst the veritable atmosphere of a hermitage with the observance of regular meditation, congregational prayer, reading of scriptures etc ; (c) the preaching parties were composed of , at least, a dozen of enthusiastic trained workers with the help of whom it was quite easy to organise big religious or social functions within a very short time and perform them with considerable amount of success ; (d) whenever calamities befall in any part of the country, the Sangha authority, with the help of these trained workers of the various preaching parties, can at once rush succour to the distressed and thus get proper opportunity to cope successfully with the situation ; (e) as the preaching parties usually tour from town to town, from village to village and from door to door, in various provinces, the Sangha has gained and been maintaining mass contact and mass–popularity ; (f) preaching parties have been the mainstay of the Sangha, being regular collectors of voluntary contributions from the benevolent public, throughout the land.

Thus it may easily be realised how much and to what an extent these preaching parties have justified their existence by proving themselves useful and efficacious in so many ways, in serving the cause of the Sangha and of the society and the nation in general.

In 1925, relief works on the occasion of the Pitripaksha Mela at Gaya and the Annakut Mela relief at Benaras were successfully undertaken and the Benaras branch of the Sangha was inaugurated. During this year and the next, flood relief works in Midnapore and in Orissa were undertaken in large scale by the Sangha. Relief work on the occasion of the Car festival of Lord Jagannath at Puri was taken up by the Sangha in the year 1926, and Puri branch of the Sangha had its start. Thus within a few years the activities of the

Sangha spread over four provinces—Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

There were other Kinds of activities started by this time. The Calcutta office of the Sangha being removed in the year 1926 to a comparatively large house at the Cornwallis Street. The "**Sangha Sevak-Sammilani**"—an association of the adherents of the Sangha—was founded there ; through which the Acharya began to attract large number of youths, specially students and give them life-building instructions. Electrified by the dynamic touch of the Acharya, hundreds of youths eagerly adopted the ideals of self-control and self-discipline and continence towards development of their physical, mental and moral powers. Many of these youths volunteered their services, in various ways, in carrying on the activities of the Sangha. Many of them lived as Ashramites for years together and served with the Sanyasins and the Brahmacharins of the Sangha. Some of them later on caught the fire of renunciation and dedicated their lives to the service of the Sangha and were gradually initiated into the life of Sannyas.

At this time at the initiative of the Acharya, an organ of the Sangha in the name "**Pranav**" began to be published regularly and systematically to disseminate the ideas and ideals of the Mission and the messages of the Acharya. Literatures in the form of books and pamphlets dealing with the life-building ideas and ideals, with the imposing portrait of the Acharya in them, began to be printed in various languages and circulated throughout the land for moral, religious and spiritual amelioration of the masses.

THE ACHARYA IN THE KUMBHA MELA FOR THE FIRST TIME

In the year 1927, the Acharya appeared for the first time as the Prophet of the Age in the Purna Kumbha Fair at Hardwar.

Elaborate relief operations were undertaken from the Sangha to help and guide the huge concourse of pilgrims in various ways and the services of the Sangha was highly spoken of by the higher officials.*

The Acharya sat on his spiritual altar and were worshipped and propitiated thrice daily by his disciples together with hundreds of pilgrims. Hundreds of pious pilgrims received spiritual instruction and illumination from him. Itinerant monks were invited to be organised and to undertake social welfare works at their leisure period, after devoting five to six hours in their spiritual practice and scriptural studies. When leaving Hardwar, the Acharya told, in an exalted mood, those who were then present that he had given some hints only of what would be his successive programme of nation-building activities.

In July 1927, the Head Office of the Sangha was removed to a bigger house at the Mirzapur street in central Calcutta near the College Square. A Students' Home was started in connection with the Head Office with a group of devout students, under the direct supervision of the Acharya himself, The "Sangha Sevak Sammilani"—mentioned above went on in full swing, attracting greater number of youths.

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* The Kumbha fair is by far the biggest religious gathering in the world and a glorious monument of India's spiritual greatness.

Thousands of Hindu monks of various sects, professing various schools of philosophy and following various paths for spiritual attainments, gather on the occasion. Millions of pilgrims pour in at the fair from all parts of India and outside. The fair sits at three years' interval at Hardwar, Prayag, Nasik and Ujjain in persuance to the various auspicious astrological combinations of the various planets and constellations. The origin of the dates back to the period of the prehistoric tussle between the Gods and the Demons on a pitcher of nectar, of which a few drops fell on the spots, mentioned above, when the pitcher was being removed, from place to place, by the Gods to deceive the Demons.

In this way, the philanthropic mission of the Sangha, which originally saw the light in the form of humanitarian works, developed, in course of a few years, its various aspects—spiritual, religious, moral, educational and industrial, and won wide popularity with appreciations from the public leaders, as well as, from the high officials.

It naturally became imperative to give the Sangha a regular organisational shape with its legal rules and constitutions and a code of strict discipline—internal and external.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION OF THE SANGHA WITH MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

In the year 1927, the Acharya got a Memorandum of Association of his Sangha prepared with its objects and activities under the following heads :—(i) Spiritual and cultural propaganda and religious reform ; (ii) Spread of education on the basis of spiritual and moral ideas and principles ; (iii) Purification of the holy places of pilgrimage and restoration of thier primitive spiritual atmosphere ; (iv) Humanitarian works ; (v) social reformatory and organisational activities, (vi) Spread of Indian culture in foreign lands.

RULES AND CONSTITUTION OF THE SANGHA

A Board of trustees, consisting of the Sannyasins of the Sangha was formed and the same was legally registered under Act XXI of 1860 in the name 'BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA'. A general committee was formed with the monastic and lay members of the Sangha ; but the Governing Body consisted of only the trustees of the Sangha, the Acharya himself being its life-long President and Treasurer. There were no local committees ; the affairs of all the branch-centres and their activities were conducted and maintained by the Governing Body of the Sangha.

As a result (a) all the devoted and temporary workers were under direct supervision and at the command of the Sangha-authority (b) all the resources were under the control of the Governing Body ; (c) the Sangha authority could, if it found necessary, concentrate the entire strength and resources of the Sangha at any place, at any moment ; (d) the spiritual training towards life-building of the dedicated souls, as well as, the volunteers of the Sangha went on uninterrupted, under direct supervision and instructions of the Acharya ; (e) the entire Sangha appeared to be one united and well-compact whole, functioning under the infallible guidance and at the supreme command of the omniscient Acharya. To facilitate this organisational integrity of the Sangha he introduced compulsory gathering for a period of time of all the monastic members of the Sangha twice annually, at the feet of the Acharya.

THE INTERNAL DISCIPLINE OF THE SANGHA-LIFE

But this was, however, only the external aspect of the Sangha, and what was most important and specially note-worthy was the internal spiritual aspect of the Sangha, which gradually developed through a course of spiritual training, under the omniscient guidance of the Acharya himself, who patiently and untiringly persevered to bring home to his spiritual children what was the Sangha, what were actually the secrets of Sangha life, what were the ideals and principles that could hold the Sangha in tact and save it from disintegration. Inspirations and instructions of the Acharya on these matters were codified and published in book-form under the title "Sangha-Geeta"—(the Divine Hymn of the Sangha), from which several important points are noted below :—

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE SANGHA.

(1) Whenever the Supreme descends on the Earth in human form as the Acharya (Spiritual Master) for universal amelioration

and emancipation, then a tremendous spiritual force sets in and spreads its waves on all sides. The founder of the Sangha was such a Divine personality— the representative of the Most High.

(2) Certain pure stainless recipient souls of uncommon merits catch, that Divine power for radiation ; the dedicated children of the Sangha are themselves recipients and mediums of the great spiritual force ushered in through the super-human personality of the Acharya.

(3) Just as in the solar system, the planets turn on their respective orbits with the sun as the centre ; similarly, the dedicated sons of the Sangha move and act around the Acharya, as the centre of gravitation.

(4) These dedicated souls, in as much as, they surrender to and try to identify themselves, closer and closer, with the personality of the Acharya, become more and more perfect and powerful instrument in the hand of the Acharya for transmission of the spiritual force and for working out of the Divine mission.

(5) Millions of people quench their thirst from a single reservoir of water, set up by a benevolent person ; in the same way, the Sangha, the great spiritual reservoir of the Master, will satisfy the demand of millions of thirsty souls.

(6) The Sangha itself is the greater form, the bigger body of the Acharya who is the power-personality of the Sangha. Hence the will and commandment of the Sangha, as a unit, is the will and commandment of the Acharya himself.

THE SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE SANGHA

The Acharya imprinted upon the mind of the apostles of the Sangha that his did not fall in the same line with so many Ashrams,

Sanghas, Maths and Missions that prevailed in the country. But his was the instrument of the Almighty Will, wielded by the Supreme and that no body, whoever and however great he may be, could stand in the way of the Sangha or bring disintegration into it. The Acharya urged his monk-disciples to completely surrender their individuality to himself, and fully merge their individual will or choice into the cosmic will and infallible decision of the Acharya, emphasising that this would be the highest achievement of the Sangha-life.

The Acharya assured his spiritual children that they were being placed in the proper position and environment with proper respective duties and responsibilities, most congenial and conducive to their spiritual unfoldment. The Acharya desired that the mind, heart and the intellect of the dedicated sons of the Sangha should always be directed towards and commune with himself (the Acharya) ; just as the hand of the compass always and invariably points towards the North. The Acharya was particularly careful about guarding off his dedicated sons against external influence of any sort. For this purpose he introduced, for all the children of the Sangha, the compulsory system of living, moving, and working in a body under all circumstances. He also prohibited, on principle, his children from accepting any conditional gift or donation but ordered his Sangha to be maintained by voluntary contributions, collected from door to door, throughout the land, insisting on the ancient great ideal of an Indian Sannyasin e.g. that of begging alms from house to house for his livelihood.

SEPERATISM CONDEMNED IN THE SANGHA-LIFE

To uphold the spirit of universal co-operation in the Sangha, the Acharya stipulated, time and again, that the Sangha would not allow the spirit of seperatism and exclusiveness but develop sympathy and friendship towards all. The Acharya often reminded

his dedicated disciples that more than two thousand years have elapsed after the great Buddha inaugurated his Sangha. During this long long interval, Indian people had no opportunity of getting any idea or experience about Sangha (Organisational life) ; of course there have been innumerable Ashrams, Maths religious communites with large followings, but they could, however, be called anything but Sangha, (organisation). The Sangha is a living organism like the human body, the entire functioning of which is carried on at the direction of the centre—the brain. Of the Buddhist Sangha, the Buddha himself was the brain and soul ; the entire Sangha lived, moved and functioned like a single individual, with one brain, one mind, one heart. The Acharya often predicted that his would be a unique Sangha a glorious combination of the Vedic ideals with the spirit of the Buddhist Sangha.

The unreserved love and motherly affection of the Acharya was, above all, the greatest factor of cementing the Sangha-body as an integral whole, the Acharya's care and attention being equally shared by all his children. The Acharya, out of his infinite love for his children, used to feed all the monks, the devotees, the labourers, the servants irrespective of their caste or status—in his presence with motherly affection. This system, he maintained till the day before he shook off his earthly tabernacle ; the system is still scrupulously followed in the Sangha, by way of installing a portrait of the Acharya at the time of dining.

THE SOURCE OF THE VITAL POWERS OF THE SANGHA

The Acharya impressed upon the heart of the monks that self-control, self-abnegation, self-discipline and continence are the vital powers of the Sangha ; while luxury and frivolity are death blows to it. The Acharya trained his monk-disciples to observe strict discipline and control in matters of dress, diet and habits. Anything, not indispensable, for sustaining the physical existence,

is to be considered as luxury and should be scrupulously shunned. He instructed his children that the body and mind of a man lose their energy and activity, if they are given ease and comfort ; that the easelovings are the do-little.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SONS OF THE SANGHA AS DETERMINED BY THE ACHARYA

The Acharya particularly pointed out to his devoted followers the morbid condition of the people and inspired them with their God-ordained responsibility of inspiring the nation with the zeal of tremendous and incessant activity saying "Work ! Work ! Work ! for amelioration of the fallen nation, for re-invigoration of the lifeless inert people, for re-organisation of the disintegrated and disrupted masses ; work selflessly ; work should be your recreation and any period of rest undesirable and unbearable. What is rest and recreation ? It is only the replacement of one sort of work by another ; the ultimate rest of the Sangha-workers will be in the grave. "He repeatedly instigated his devoted sons, that the sacred blood of their life should be shed, drop by drop, in indefatigable and incessant work to wash away the age-long sins of morbidity and inactivity of the nation. He made it clear to his sons that to live together jointly in the Sangha would mean great efficacy towards spiritual achievement ; for, in order to live with others, one has to sacrifice his indiviual choices and interests, curtail his personal needs and smooth down, bit by bit, the sharp angularities of his nature.

The Acharya desired that his children should always be so much absorbed in meditation on him and so much imbued with his ideals that they might easily and intuitively catch every bit of his feelings and sentiments ; for the Acharya would give very rarely direct addresses ; he would have his will and decisions silently

transmitted to his followers and wanted them to be carried out according to his desire.

THE SONS OF THE SANGHA OUGHT TO COMPLETELY IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH THE SANGHA

The Acharya urged that the sons of the Sangha should have no seperate entity ; their individual existence and ego should be merged in the greater existence and ego of the Sangha ; so that their progress, achievement and emancipation would amount to those of the Sangha ; the ideals and objects of the Sangha should be identified with those of theirs ; their only meditation would be to dive deep into the thoughts relating to the Sangha ; their Salvation would be in the salvation of the entire Sangha. He insisted that to the monks of his Brotherhood, the Sangha would be the only God ; the Sangha would be the Absolute Existence ; the Sangha would be the Supreme Self ; the Sangha would be the store-house of Infinite Power.

The Acharya ordered the monks of his Brotherhood to be extremely strict in the observance of the details of his instructions regarding the Sangha-life ; that none should live, move or work alone ; none should mix with the house-holders, except on the necessity of collecting contributions ; none should accept invitations from the householders to take food alone in theirs ; that they should not on principle, criticise the ideals, principles and activities of the Sangha adversely, not suffer others to do so with impunity ; that cursed would be he amongst the sons of the Sangha who would harbour or instigate mental ill-feelings or try to bring in dissensions in the sangha by the thoughts, words or deeds ; that individual ideas and principles however noble and lofty otherwise, should be sternly sacrificed before the united decisions of the Sangha, the united Sangha being the living representative of the Acharya himself.

The Acharya characterised the Sangha as congregational spiritual journey towards the Eternal and the Absolute ; that during the protracted journey, if any-body be disabled or has a chance to go astray, the rest of the party would not leave him away but save him from pitfalls or carry him along with them. He warned that pitfals there were many, dangerous and alluring, lurking on the way but they would fail to tempt away or deviate the sons of the Sangha from their path, if they could rely on and stick to, with bull-dog tenacity, the great Sangha and the Divine Sangha-Lord—the Acharya. He explained to his disciples that the Sangha was a great Divine power-house of which each of the sons of the Sangha, was as it were, a part of the machine, the Acharya himself being the operator ; he instructed them to work always with the idea that they had no separate will or entity, that they were the veritable instruments at the hands of the Acharya to be wielded at his will. The Mission of the Sangha was providentially determined and the dedicated sons of the Sangha were the ear-marked apostles of the Divine Mission.

THE SANGHA IS THE DEPOSITORY OF THE POWERS AND THE IDEALS OF THE AGE.

The Acharya revealed to the spiritual inheritors of his Mission that the Sangha would be the Seed-bed of the future glorious Hindu Nation that the present degenerated condition of the Hindus would not last long ; that time would come by the inscrutable Will of the Providence, when the Hindus would once again lead the whole humanity to the path of universal emancipation, peace and bliss. He stressed that materials that were necessary to reorganise, re-vitalise and rebuild this ancient nation, would lie deposited in the Sangha. He exposed to his followers that the Sangha was, as it were, his bigger body ; and that he diffused, bit by bit, into the devoted children of the Sangha, the spiritual power and Divine Mission that was revealed in his life, and that he had also trained them up after the pattern of his own life ; that his life and attainments were the

seeds, while the Sangha and its achievements would be the trees, grown out of the seeds.

The Acharya also explained that the Sangha was an epitome or miniature form of the future nation ; and that the Sangha's Mission—its plan and programme of the work, was a Divinely destined systematic process of nation-building ; that the process might appear utopian to some, unsuitable for the age to others, and failure to still some others ; but that, as it had been a revelation and a Divine decree, it must be fulfilled in due course of time ; that the Sangha-apostles would have to work without fear and without care for what people might think or say. The Acharya's unique process of nation building will be dealt with, in short, in the next chapter.

THE SANGHA IS AN EPITOME OF THE HINDU SOCIETY

The Acharya himself was a full-fledged personification of the eternal ideals and principles and messages of Hinduism—Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture. The Sangha is a bigger body of the Acharya and an epitome of the Hindu society. The Acharya built up the Sangha in such a way that all the fundamental ideals and principles of the Hindu social system—individual, domestic and social life—were manifested and are being maintained in it. The Sangha's God-ordained responsibility is to propagate and teach the same to the entire rank and file of the Hindu society and later on to the craving humanity. This will be dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

THE DIVINE BUILDER OF THE NATION

Moral and spiritual movements

The Sangha-body having been thus well-shaped and adequately disciplined and its limbs—the dedicated sons—being properly trained, the Acharya now determined to give nation-building character to the activities of the Sangha, in the form of several successive movements, as a necessary steps towards reorganisation, reunification and revitalisation of the disintegrated and degenerated masses and also re-instatement of true ideals in the individual and the collective life. To all intents and purposes, these nation-building movements already existed, in seed-form, in the very nature of the various activities of the Sangha.

From time immemorial India had been the seed-bed of spirituality ; the individual, social and national life of the land had been shaped in the hands of the spiritual masters—the sages and the seers ; so that the life of the Indian people was built upon spiritual and religious ideals with a thorough spiritual outlook. As such, no movement, however, well-planned and well-equipped, would take root in Indian soil, if it had no spirituality as its basis. Swami Vivekananda, the Divine messanger of Indian nationality, trumpetted this immutable secret into the self forgetful ears of the Indian leaders and warned them against the dazzling allurements of the Western politics.

THE PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MOVEMENT

The Prophet of the Age,—the Acharya, first introduced a vigorous movement to deluge the land with a flood of moral and

spiritual ideals. Thousands of leaflets containing the golden rules of self-control and self-discipline and inspiring mottoes of spiritual ideals with the Acharya's imposing portrait, as the glowing embodiment of self-control and continence, in the midst, and booklets on self-control and temperance began to be printed and distributed from man to man in every house and amongst the students of schools and colleges, inviting them to personally see and receive moral and spiritual instructions and Divine benedictions of the spiritual Master of the Age.

Public gatherings were being held in various places and inspiring lectures delivered by eloquent monks on self-sacrifice, self-control, self-discipline, continence, the ideals of the student life, the secrets of life-building, the source of infinite energy in man, the real cause of degeneration of the nation, re-instatement of the ancient system of simultaneous development of physical, mental and moral powers and such other allied subjects. Addresses on similar subjects were also delivered in schools and colleges in the gathering of students. The audience would listen to the inspiring speeches and songs of the monks with rapt attention for hours together and when in the conclusion, the monk, with his orange countenance, beaming with spiritual fervour and sincere love and sympathy, cordially invited the craving souls to seize the unique opportunity to see and enjoy the Divine company of the Prophet of the Age, who had been waiting with the affectionate heart of a mother with his eager arms out-stretched to receive his beguiled children into his loving bosom, the entire audience, enchanted, as it were, followed the monk to the abode of the spiritual Master to see him and receive his immortal blessings. Often it was found that at the close of the speech when a young monk had been singing, in soul-stirring strain, a song on the ancient ideals of India—"Oh ! we are the sons of the renunciators,—the sages and the seers ; why should we be tempted to accept the ideals of worldly enjoyments ?"

and so on, august assemblage of thousands of people stood agape, their mind receding back to the ancient golden age of India when the Indian nation was, not only the spiritual Master of mankind but also their leader and fore-runner in all secular matters too, instructing and educating the entire humanity*. Remarkable it was to note further that the audience would not be satisfied and dispersed until the song had been repeated several times over. This was a common experience in those days.

On the other hand, the preaching parties were travelling from door to door in towns and villages, carrying the message of hope and blessing, inviting people to come to the dynamic touch of the spiritual Master. The preaching parties would, while going a-begging from doot to door in the streets, sing a song, "Oh ? where are those ideals of righteousness, devotion to truth, merits and virtues and benevolence of ancient India ? Alas ! all are gone ! Sleeping are all the gods, slumbering are the sons of the Aryan sages !" and so on, people whould forget going to their business and attending to their household works and raptly listen to the ministrels of the ancient ideals of India, some with exclamations of sincere appreciations, some with their cheeks overflowing with tears of repentance, while others in amazment and mute silence. Sometimes many a noble heart would have been so much moved that they would invite the party to their parlour with request to continue the song over and over again for hours and would reward their courtesy with handsome contributions towards the philanthropic activities of the Sangha.

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* From the first born and educated people of this land, learnt knowledge and culture, all the people of the earth.

INDIVIDUAL TOUCH WITH THE ACHARYA OF INNUMERABLE THIRSTY SOULS

As a result of this untiring agitation, thirsty souls in hundreds and thousands swarmed, day and night, to the residence of the Acharya. The Acharya was also indefatigable and would sit from 4 A. M. to 11 A. M. in the morning, then again from 3 P. M. to 11 P. M. in the evening, and received, instructed and blessed, one by one, the huge crowd. Of course many had to return disappointed to toil for his chance, the next day. In those days, whoever had a chance of witnessing the scene at the central office of the Sangha at the Mirjapur Street, near College Square, Calcutta, he would have surely seen the rush of wistful crowd pressing from the doorway through the little open space along the staircase upto the second floor in front of the entrance of the Acharya's closet. The same scene was to be seen, day after day, month after month, in the scorching heat of the summer sun, as well as, in the severe cold of December night. The visitors would have to stand for hours together, the tedious course of seeing the Acharya, one by one to have their respective chance, their whole body literally drenched in sweat, in the hot days of May and June. In view of the above circumstances, we may have a glimpse of the superhuman power with which the Divine Magnet was attracting the craving souls.

LIFE-BUILDING AND CHARACTER-BUILDING INSTRUCTIONS OF THE ACHARYA.

Thousands of youths were electrified by the dynamic touch, ineffable love and affection and inspiring character building instructions of the Acharya. The Acharya would invariably imprint upon the mind of the visitors that—want of self-control and continence had been the vital cause of downfall of the nation ; that chastity was life and sensuality was death ; that control of the

sense and conservation of the vital fluid—semen, the elixir of life—is the secret of strength and energy—physical, moral and intellectual ; that waste of semen is self-killing. The Acharya inspired the young souls with words of fire that they are the future assets of the nation ; that self-control and continence would release the spring of infinite energy latent in them ; that the nation's future welfare depended upon the building up of their moral life and character. He would explain to them that life begets life ; the lamp of life may be lighted by bringing it in touch with another burning lamp. The Acharya would point out to his own life as such a burning light of self-control and continence and encouraged them to have themselves spiritually connected with himself and pray to him for power and blessings and follow his instructions of self-culture.

He would instruct them to be strictly moderate in diet and sleep and urged them to be disillusioned of the false ideas that rich and substential diet and sleep for seven or eight hours are absolutely necessary for sustenance of health of the body. He would denouce this wrong idea on the face of it and ask them to be habituated to plain and simple dishes and a moderate period of sleep for not exceeding five hours. He would advise them to follow a well-regulated life, laying special stress on self-control and self-discipline ; and for the purpose, he would teach them to prepare a code of moral rules and a routine of daily work and to follow them with regularity and punctuality, punctuating the failures or deviations with observances of fasts, meditations, and prayers for hours. These instructions of course, were not uncommon ; but they were considered invaluable and bore incalculable results to the young aspirant, in view of the dynamic spiritual powers which the Acharya silently transmitted, revolutionising their entire mental constitution by infusing into them purity of thought and sublimity of aspirations.

"Those who are determined to build up their life and character through self-control and continence, are dearest to my heart ; my blessings and powers are always available to them, wherever they may be, they will always be under spiritual care and protection."

SACRIFICING YOUTHS, DEVOTED TO THE WORKS OF THE SANGHA

A number of youths of pure heart and uncommon merits acquired in previous births, had, at this period, come in close touch with the Acharya and being illumined by his instructions of renunciation and self-control and selfless service, renounced the world and were included in his religious Brotherhood, Hundreds of enthusiastic youths were inspired to serve as voluntary workers for years together in the Ashrams or Preaching Parties, or often in the Relief Operations, organised by the Sangha. Thus the movements of moral and spiritual uplift which tremendously shook first the City of Calcutta, gradually, spread in leaps and bounds to all the districts of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and the United Provinces within a period of two years.

THE ACHARYA'S ATTEMPT AT BUILDING UP OF THE HOUSEHOLD LIFE

The Acharya, hitherto confined his attention in helping individuals to build up their life and character. From February 1923, the Acharya launched another movement of conferring his spiritual blessings on the householders and to re-instate them in their ideals. His Sannyasi apostles visited from door to door, with this message of hope to invite men and women to avail this unique opportunity.

A thrill of joy and spiritual fervour shook the family life of the society. Thousands of families began to flock together at the

Acharya's abode to receive spiritual gifts and instructions on the ideals of family life and to rid themselves of the ills of deviations and the unhappiness under which they were labouring throughout their life with utter despair without any way out of them.

Hundreds of men and women came with the hope of unloading their heavy hearts, with the object of getting illuminations in the gloomy path of their life and learning the secrets of peace and happiness in their domestic life. The Acharya taught them the secrets of self-control in their conjugal life and offered them his spiritual powers and protection. He instructed them that the object of married life was not sensual enjoyments but propagation of ideal sons and daughters ; that this ancient ideal enjoined by their Aryan forefathers, had been lost sight of and conjugal life of the society had been degenerated and degraded almost to a beastly level ; that here was the reason why the whole nation had lost its manliness and manhood and the magnanimity and merits of their predecessors.

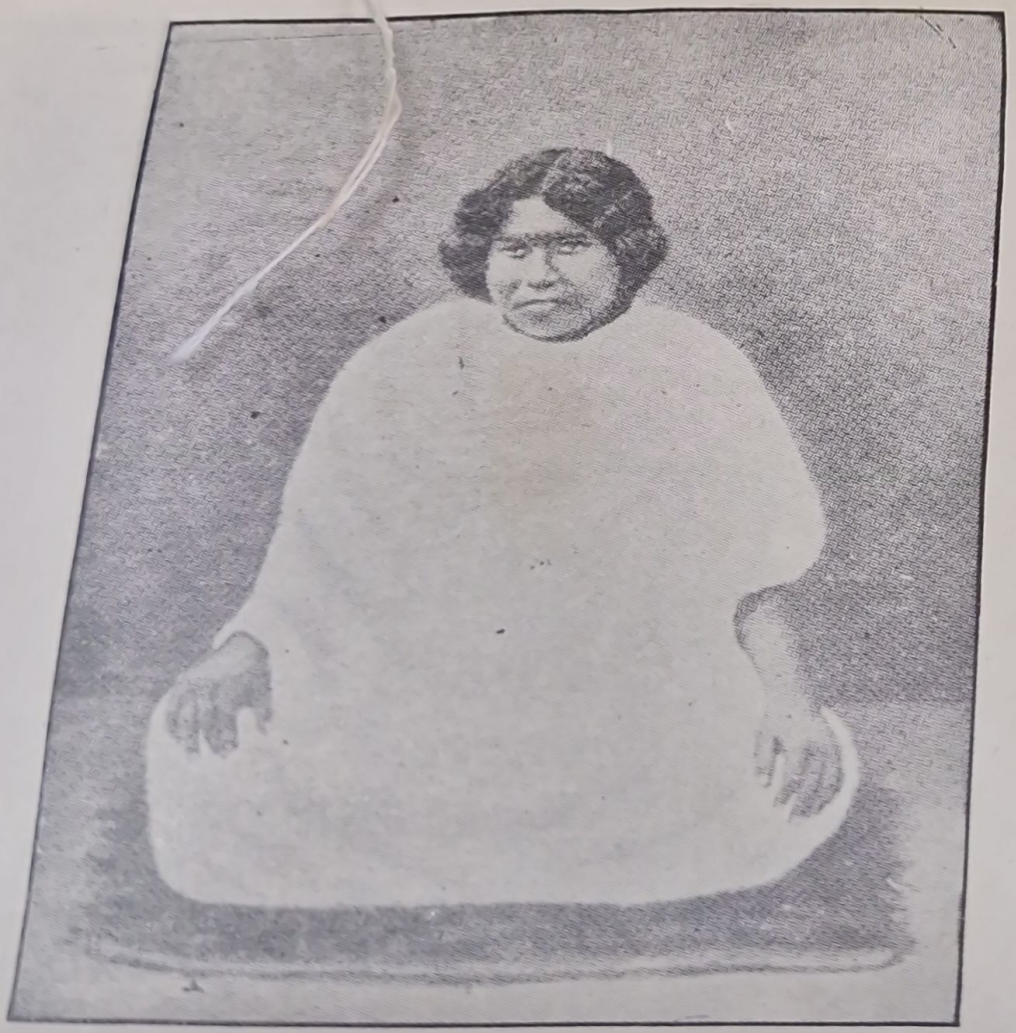
The Acharya then used to sit day and night with the exception of a few hours only, in an exalted mood, on the altar of his spiritual illumination, glowing within the circle of a Divine Aura. The Acharya used to take his seat on a tiger's skin in grave silence in a closed room, dimly lighted by a lamp. The vast bulk of the body of the Acharya and his countenance glowing with Divine lustre and ineffable love for the humanity suggested to the mind of the visitors, the vision of Lord Shiva, the God of gods. The visitors, over-whelmed with an unprecedented awe and reverence and surging emotion at the very sight, fell flat on his feet or bow down in humility and devotion, some sobbing aloud, some shedding tears silently, some transported with untold felicitations, while others staring at him, as if drinking him with their wistful eyes. The Acharya received them all, treated with them as his dear children, inspired them with the dynamic touch of his spiritual powers.

At the order of the Acharya, a book was published containing his instructions on the ideals of domestic life and the duties and responsibilities thereof. The monks who stood as the guard at the door to marshal the visitors one after another, in the presence of the Acharya, was instructed by him to explain to the visitors that the Acharya was omniscient and as such, he had at his fingers' ends the past, present and future and knew the ins and outs of everybody and to request them not to put any question to the Acharya but sit in silence before him till the Acharya tested the soil of their hearts and awarded proper spiritual gifts to each of them.

THE ACHARYA'S SUPER-NATURAL POWERS REVEALED

We know from one such visitors who received a Mantra (secret mystic words) to repeat for some time daily ; that he smiled and said that he had been used to repeat such Mantras for hours together every day but to no effect. The Acharya became serious and told him that he ventured to say so because he had not the good fortune to receive initiation from a real Acharya (Spiritual Master). However, the Acharya asked the gentleman to carry his order for a week and allowed him to throw off the Mantra having written it on a "bel leaf" into the Ganges, if he did not get the desired result. We learned from the gentleman later on that he was brought to humiliation when he got the expected result after repeating the Mantra, within a short period.

Another person who was a staunch unbeliever in spiritual matters, went out of curiousity to see the Acharya and was vouchsafed by the Acharya a sacred Mantra to be repeated daily for sometime and was ordered to observe certain restrictions in diet. The gentleman told us that he laughed within himself in disbelief and derision and determined not to carry out the orders of the Acharya and went straight to the restaurant and ate fowls. Soon he



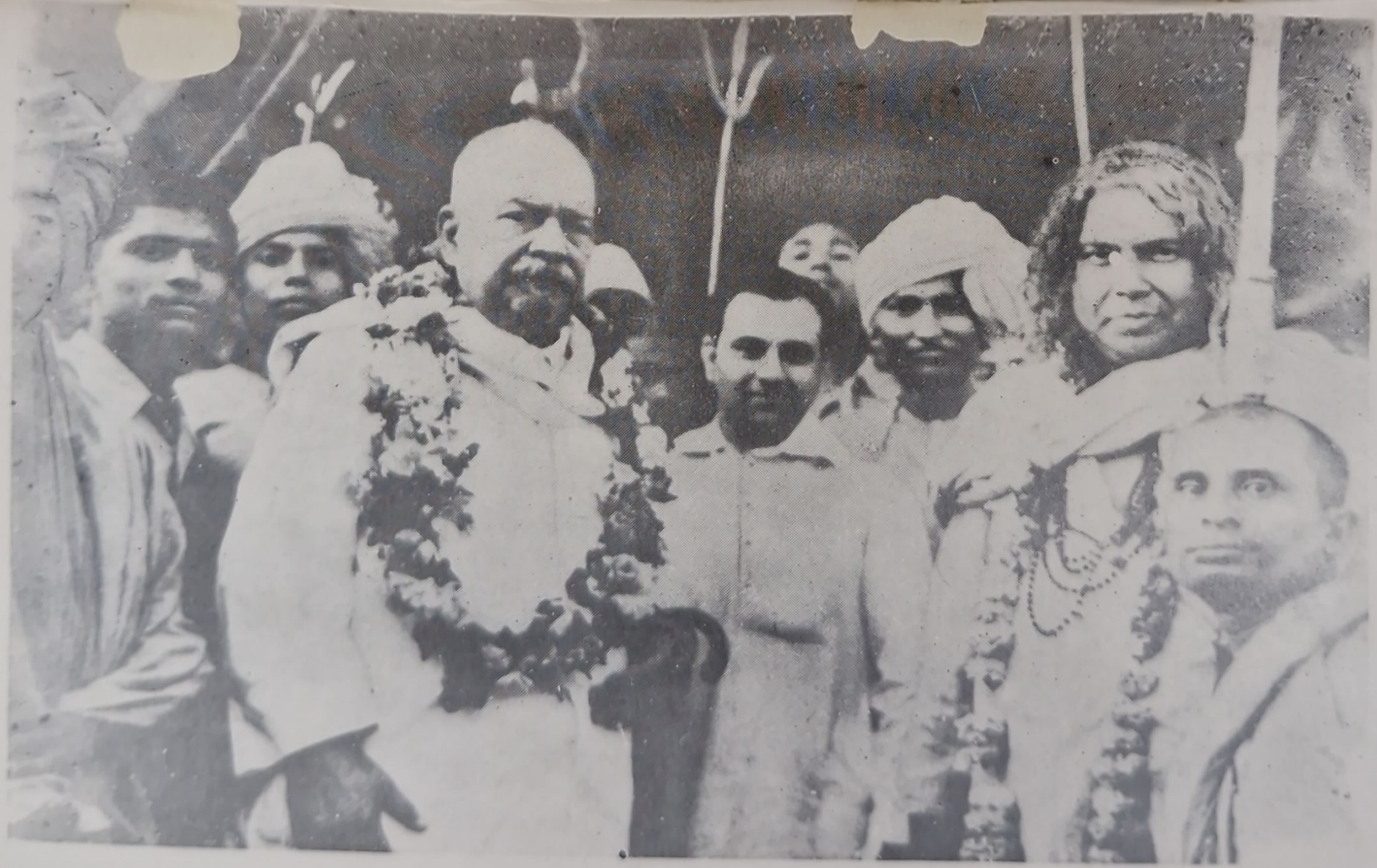
Brahmachari Binode
(The Acharya in his Boyhood)

Sri Sri Acharyadev
Lover of the devotees.

The Acharya as the honest preceptor.

The Acharya as the reformer of the holy places (at the foot of the hills of Gaya)

The Acharya amidst a group of boys and youths, iniated into the practice of self-control and continence.



Sri Sri Acharyadev with Sir Manmathanath Mukhopadhyay
at Calcutta Hindu Sammelan. (Sri Sri Shivaratri 1940)

The Acharya as the organizer of the Hindu Rakshidal (Rural Militia)

Rest House for pilgrims at Gaya Sevashram
(Bihar) (Part View)

Office Room of the Sangha at Gaya

The Acharya as the
Re-organizer of the sannyasins.

The Acharya as the Jagatguru
(Saviour of mankind)

was attacked with a serious type of tuberculosis and under went various sorts of treatment without any effect. Then he repented and realised that the disease was due to his disobedience to the Acharya. He then began to repeat the Mantra in right earnest and with devotion and observed strictness in diet and in course of a few months he mysteriously recovered. Many time, the Acharya, unwilling to allow his time to be killed by any argumentative visitor, creating disadvantage to others, would ask him to sit in silent mood of prayer before the altar where the Acharya was daily worshipped, assuring him that thereby he would get answers to his queries. But the real craving souls, as soon as they would be approaching, would hear with endless felicitations, the Acharya exclaiming in a sweet voice of consolation—'No fear.' You are my children ; this day forward, I take off the burden of all the sins of your previous births ; you will, henceforth be always under my spiritual protection.

The Acharya often fell ill and suffered for days together. One householder disciple who asked the Acharya why great spiritual persons like him fell ill and suffered, got the retort that it was for them, i. e. the disciples, meaning thereby that those diseases and sufferings were not really his ; but they were due to the sins which were unburdened to him by the people who took refuge in his spiritual grace.

THE ACHARYA DESIRED THAT THE ENTIRE PEOPLE SHOULD BROUGHT IN TOUCH WITH HIMSELF ; FOR HE STIPULATED THAT LIFE BEGETS LIFE

The Acharya would inspire his monk missionaries to carry this message all over the land—"In this life of mine, has been manifested an infinite amount of spiritual energy that will work out salvation for the whole nation ; just go from door to door all over

the country and bring the entire mass in touch with this Divine Energy."

He stipulated that people had enough of religious teachings, enough of scriptural expositions, enough of reasonings and arguments ; but that could not give them anything tangible to quench their eternal thirst or ease their difficulties ; that what the people now wanted was a real man, a living and tangible ideal, a blazing character, a burning spiritual personality whose superhuman touch and sweet words of consolation might shed, in their lacerated hearts, lustre of hope and inspiration ; whose omniscient guidance and spiritual vigilance would make their lives free from all moral failings ; whose spiritual sparks would instantaneously kindle up the potentialities, lying dormant in them."

The Acharya strongly deprecated the spirit of escapism in the householders and advised them to manfully perform their domestic and social duties with righteousness ; and encouraged them with instances of the lives of the celebrated sages and kings and renowned great man of the past who were all house-holders. He assured them that their lives could be sublimated even by living the life of a householder ; that the ideals of true religion did not enjoin them to compulsorily retire to solitude for attainment of eternal peace and grace of God ; and that, on the contrary, they would be violating the injunctions of the Scriptures and the ideals set forth by the spiritual Masters, if they take recourse to retirement and that they would enjoy the bliss of spiritual attainments through proper discharge of their daily duties, if only they had the guidance of the Acharya behind them. The Acharya explained to them that true religion did not lie in only performing prayers or rituals or meditations in solitude ; that it was not the only way of ataining the grace of the Lord ; but that the works they performed for their

family or for the society or the nation, were equally the parts and parcels of religion that without them purification of the mind and consequently attainments of self knowledge and spiritual blessings were not possible. He exhorted that work was real worship, if it was done with a spirit of dedication and devotion to the Lord.

THE ACHARYA ATTEMPTS TO DIFFUSE THE MOVEMENT ALL OVER THE LAND

The Acharya then made up his mind to diffuse the waves of those movements througout the length and breadth of the country ; and for this purpose he undertook the programme of a wide propaganda tour. During the year 1928–1929, he visited most of the towns of the United Province and many places of other provinces too. A party of preachers would be deputed first to announce his august advent, to make all necessary arrangements for his stay and also to organise public meetings, The Acharya's message and report of the activities of his Sangha had already reached to the countrymen through various sources. The literate public were already quite aware of the spiritual awakening and moral regeneration which the Acharya was bringing in the country by his moral and spiritual movements ; and thereby a feeling of keen inquisitiveness had naturally been created in their minds about the Acharya's life and activities. So, when the news of the Acharya's advent reached any town, unprecedented enthusiasm was evinced amongst all classes of people. The leaders would issue appeals to arrange adequate receptions for the Acharya and to convene public meetings to pay him respects and hear his messages. People in thousands, specially the student community, would crowd together to receive him at the railway stations, and lead him in long processions to the places of his residence.

The Acharya would then scarcely attend public meetings except when it became unavoidable ; and even while attending, he would

scarcely speak but would sit silently in his habitual spritual grandeur—a wonder to the spectators. But when his gifted disciple monks, in course of their long inspiring and eloquent speech, explained the Acharya's plan of national reconstruction on the basis of moral and spiritual regeneration, and invited, on behalf of the Acharya, the co-operation of the public, the audience would be throughly convinced of the efficacy of the plan, in view of the Acharya's Divine personality and would throng to the abode of the Acharya to get his instructions on life-building, character-building and nation-building, and to enliven themselves by his dynamic spiritual touch.

During this period, the Acharya would appear to be literally over-crowded and overthronged by the hankering stream of visitors, day and night ; he would pay very little attention to his food and sleep—the bare necessities for his health. He would not be satisfied until the whole space inside and outside his residence was crowded to suffocation by the visitors.

SOME INTERESTING INCIDENTS

Often curious incidents took place. Once when the Acharya was in Ranchi, the summer capital of the province of Bihar, amongst the crowd of visitors was a venerable Bhrahmo gentleman who came to have his query answered as to why and how the Acharya tolerated the purile superstition of worshiping the designed images of God who is One, Absolute and Immutable. He was explaining his question to the Acharya who was simply smiling without a word. The gentleman went on—'Idolatry is a great scar on Hinduism ; it is as foolish, as anything.' After a minute's pause the gentleman murmured—But Acharya Shankara, who was the greatest exponent of Monism and a man of Realisation, himself admitted idolatry and composed and sang hymns in praise of Gods and Goddesses ; he had been preaching, in the same breath, the personal and the

impersonal aspects of God.' At this point the Acharya broke his silence and punctuated—"Yes ! this is exactly the truth. Both the aspects of God are equally true ; He is at once the formless and with form' He is omnipotent ; nothing is impossible with him. Why should we limit him within His formless attribute ?" The gentleman without further remonstrance prostrated and parted with high reverential compliments, saying—"Oh ! wonder of wonders ! the question which haunted my mind so long and teased me every now and then, has automatically been solved in the presence of this Acharya. He must be a great Seer."

On another occasion when the Acharya visited the town of Jessore in Bengal, one of his monk-disciples went to invite the members of the local Bar-Association to see the Acharya and receive his blessings. One of the lawyers, who was rather proud of his physical powers derisively spoke to the monk —"Gentleman ! I do not believe in spirituality ; I believe in the power of the muscles ; can your Acharya teach me that ?" Then the monk retorted—"Yes, Sir, you will have whatever you like. And I, an humble disciple of the Acharya, too, can show you a bit of it." 'Well, then let us have a tussle.' With these words the lawyer suddently caught hold of the palm of the monk, little imagining that the monk was more than a match for him. The monk accepted the challenge with a smiling countenance and in the twinkling of an eye vehemently squeezed the palm of the lawyer who succumbed to the ground, severely painted in the palm of his hand. Of course, the lawyer then, kept his promise by meeting the Acharya and receiving spiritual instruction from him.

At Hazaribagh in Bihar, a professor of the local college with a party of his learned friends, came to see the Acharya. They strongly protested against the system of admittance, one by one, into the closet of the Acharya and demanded that they should be allowed to enter into the room in a body. But when they knew that the rule was

unalterable the professors agreed and one of them entered into the room with a haughty air. But as soon as he had a look at the sublime figure of the Acharya, shining in a spiritual halo, he stood, as if thunder-struck, for a few minutes. Awakened, so to say, from his reverie by a monk, he fell flat on the feet of the Acharya with tears in his eyes. Blessed by the Acharya, the professor departed and went straight to his own house without speaking a single word in reply to his questioning friends. The next day the professor came with his wife and was duly initiated by the Acharya.

THE ACHARYA'S INDEFATIGABLE WHIRLWIND PROPAGANDA TOUR

This was a whirl-wind tour both in speed and intensity. Nowhere did the Acharya stay for more than two days. But with what an intensity did he work day and night to create a tangible spiritual atmosphere and stamp permanent impressions on the minds of the local people ! Those who could fortunately seize the opportunity to see the Acharya and to recieve his blessings were simply overpowered ; those who saw but had not the good fortune to hear his sweet words or receive his affectionate blessings, cherished great hankering for the same ; those who could neither see nor receive his benign grace, repented bitterly and longed eagerly for the fulfilment of his desire. Wherever he went, he had with him a party of monk-preachers and volunteers. With their help, the Acharya created tremendous waves of spiritual fervour by organising public meetings, performing various sorts of religious functions, inviting the people by sending preachers from door to door and to the schools and colleges with literatures of various kind, dealing with the ideals, objects and activities of the Sangha, along with the teachings and messages of the prophet. Great difficulty would arise and extremely pathetic scenes would be witnessed, when the Acharya, after his short sojourn, would leave

the place. Thousands of men and women old and young, who could not see him or get his blessings, when informed that the Acharya was ready to start for elsewhere, would hasten to the spot with looks of sorrow and disappointment in their eyes, some weeping, some murmuring the words of repentance, some blaming the guiding stars of his life ; while boys and youths ran after his departing car to have his blessed look once more and would rent the sky with incessant peals of chorus shoutings 'Vandemataram' 'Guru Maharajki Jai'—salute to the Holy Mother ! Victory to the Spiritual Master ! This was a common experience wherever the Acharya went and graced the people with his Divine presence.

Local leaders would often ask the monks with a heavy heart as to why the Acharya would be leaving so soon. When the question were represented before him by one of his monk disciples, the Acharya replied that he had been only trying to usher an atmosphere in order to create the spiritual hankering in the people by the help of this whirl-wind propaganda tour ; the details of the work would follow afterwards ; that he would have to chalk out the whole nation-building scheme in a very short time ; and that he had very little time to waste in fulfilling the desires and sentiments of the individuals. The Acharya thereby means that the country-men were steeped in ignorance and inertia, without any thought or idea of social amelioration and national emancipation and that the Acharya, by means of these vigourous movements, was trying to break away this age-long morbidity and was thus preparing the background for the grand programme of national reconstruction coming afterwards.

INSTALLATION OF "GURUPUJA"

SPIRITUALITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL LIFE.

India has been, from time prehistoric, the seed-bed of spirituality. Indian nation has been essentially spiritual. Spirituality has been the summum bonum of Indian nationality. The individual, domestic, social and national life of the Indian people was firmly built upon the rock of spiritual ideals and principles. That the nation has survived so many centuries of political cataclysms, social downfalls and economic revolutions, was due to this spiritual outlook of life and its entire efforts and achievements. But who were responsible for this ? It was the Sages and Seers of India who realised the Ultimate Truth—the Absolute unity—the "Brahman", and became, as the Scriptures enjoin, the vertiable embodiment of the "Brahman"—the inexhaustible power-house of infinite knowledge, energy and bliss.

SPIRITUALITY IS TRANSMITTED FROM MASTER TO THE DISCIPLE

Spirituality is a thing transcendental ; it cannot be acquired ; it is vouchsafed, transmitted from soul to soul. The great Aryan Rishis—those men of Realisation, the veritable power-houses of infinite divine energy, connected the whole nation—its individual, social and national life with their own divine lives, thereby transmitting waves of spiritual energy into the entire Aryan population. It was thus that the spiritual basis of Indian national life was founded in remote ancient times. The Rishis also realised by intuition that spiritual communion with the Master—"The Guru"—the spiritual power-house, can be obtained by concentrating the attention upon him through unflinching love and

devoted service. Hence it was the custom and the rule that every Aryan student, from the prince to the peasant, had to go to the hermitage of the Rishis for a regular training in the art of life-building and character-building, where he lived in close company of his Master, essentially a Rishi, obeyed his order and regarded him as his most beloved and most revered guide, father, mother, friend and companion and accordingly served him with utmost devotion for dozens of years.

SPIRITUAL MASTER WAS THE GUIDE IN THE ARYAN HOUSEHOLD LIFE

Thus having the spiritual basis of life well-founded and with the physical, moral and intellectual powers simultaneously developed and with the attainments of knowledge in arts and sciences, the Aryan youth would, at the order and under the guidance of the Guru,—the Ri$hi, embraced conjugal life, not with the object of sexual enjoyments but with a view to propagate brilliant progeny that might be an asset to uphold and enhance the glory of the nation.

During centuries of foreign domination and consequent political, social and economic revolutions, and vicissitudes, due to the intrusion and super-impositions of the ideals and systems of foreign culture on Hinduism and Hindu national life, the ancient Aryan ideals and the Aryan system of life have been totally forgotten ; hence is the present indiscipline and chaos in the entire rank and file of the Hindu society.

THE ACHARYA'S HERCULEAN ATTEMPT TO RE-IN-STATE THE ANCIENT GURUKULA SYSTEM

The Acharya, with his penetrative and sweeping vision, realised this helpless state of the society and the nation and felt the Divine

urge for undertaking the Herculean task of restituting these ancient ideals and systems, as well as, of re-organising and re-building the nation on that basis. Swami Vivekananda once said that titbits of reform, as the attempts were till then going on, would do nothing useful towards the emancipation of the nation ; that for the purpose he proposed root and branch reform on spiritual basis. It devolved on the Acharya to drive that idea into a manifested truth, an actual practice.

The Acharya decidedly realised that the national life-structure of India had fallen into pieces with all its materials scattered and disintegrated. Divisions and dissensions, envy and hatred, inequity and hypocrisy, injustice and inhospitality have, at present, reduced the once homogeneous masses into numerous heterogeneous fragments. The only solution of this riddle was in concentrating the mutually warring disrupted masses round a Divine Spiritual Magnet.

The Acharya determined to place his ownself in the position of this spiritual Master and attract all the classes and masses of Indian people with his superhuman magnetism and thus to prepare the back-ground for a huge movement for social and national reconstruction, subsequently to be started by him.

We have already seen that the Acharya revealed himself as the spiritual Master of the Age, —the representative of the Most High to his monk disciples ; and as such he was ceremoniously worshipped by them in the year 1924. Thence forward he was being regularly worshipped, thrice daily in such fashion. He taught his monk-disciples to concentrate their mind and heart on his Divine personality through undeviated obedience and unflinching devotion towards him and blessed them with spiritual illumination. Now the Acharya decided to undertake a movement for re-introduction and re-installation of this ancient system in a wider and national scale !

so that the entire population might have the opportunity to connect itself with his Divine Magnetic personality and drew inspiration from it.

PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS OF GURUPUJA

With this object in view the Acharya now ordered to celebrate the ''Gurupuja'' ceremony (worship and propitiation of the spiritual Master) as public demonstrations of increasingly greater and greater magnitude. Accordingly series of innumerable functions were organised on the occasions of the anniversary celebrations of the various Ashramas of the Sangha and also on various days of holy national festivals, when the Acharya seated in a well-decorated altar, was worshipped and propitiated with great eclat by thousands of people and his disciples. Literatures dealing with the ideals and objects of Gurupuja, necessity of the same in the present degraded condition of Indian national life, as a means towards its reconstruction, were being published and widely circulated throughout the length and breadth of the country. In the holy places like Gaya, Kashi, Puri, Prayag, Hardwar etc., millions of people from all ranks and files of the society assembled during the huge annual and occasional religious congregations. The Acharya would invariable grace the occasions and accept, for hours together, congregational worship and devotional offerings of thousands of devoted hearts, in exalted states of spiritual trances and trasmitted his Divine blessings through his affectionate touch on the head.

It will be interesting to note here how the adverse critics contracted their false and foolish ideas. ''Shalagramshila'' (a round piece of stone with some auspicous marks) is the symbol of Lord Narayana and is worshipped by the Hindus as such. And when the ''Shalagrama'' is worshipped by offerings of ablutions, a particular Vedic Mantram (hymn) is uttered. That particular Vedic hymn used

to be sung in chorus by thousands of Sannyasins and devotees while they worshiped the Acharya by pouring sacred waters of the holy rivers on his feet. This function at once suggested to the mind of the critics of ''Gurupuja'' that the Acharya placed his feet on the sacred deity ''Shalagrama''. They carried on public propaganda that the Acharya had done an act of sacrilege, extremely prejudicial to the religious sentiments of the Hindu masses.

Another false idea was propagated that the Acharya had ordered the food, touched by his feet to be distributed amongst the public. The idea was contracted from the particular function mentioned above when a big brass pot with a brass covering was placed under the feet of the Acharya and was removed shortly after the observance had been over.

Perturbed by these false ideas a party of distinguished citizens of the Khulna town once approached the Acharya to have their doubts cleared. When the party crossed the river and was just landing on the soil of the ''Khulna Seva Ashram'' where the Acharya had been residing, the head of the party who was disrespectfully biased against the Acharya and was pouring, all the way, poison of vilification against him into the ears of his companions, fell down on the ground, the moment he put his feet on the land. Although greatly pained at his feet, he got up and led the party towards the residence of the Acharya, still carrying the venom of abuse on his tongue against the Acharya. While crossing a small wooden bridge over a big drain, the leader of the party again succumbed to the ground, his feet having slipped ; this time he got one of his foot fractured. These couple of mishaps raised serious misgivings in his mind. He thought that these were nothing but punishment for his crime against the Acharya. He did not venture to go in the presence of the Acharya and at once turned back and somehow returned home. The party however met the Acharya and listened to his exposition of the ideology behind the

''Gurupuja'' with increasing interest and attention. The party of visitors was so much impressed that while taking leave, one of them, in course of his talk with the Acharya, told with surging emotion that if ''Gurupuja'' (worship and propitiation of the spiritual Master) be so useful and elevating towards building up of life—individual, domestic and social, then why should the institution be limited within the circle of the devotees and followers and that it was incumbent upon them,— the distinguished persons of the soceity to adopt ways and means to propagate that in a universal scale.

THE EFFICACY OF GURUPUJA IN DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

But the sober-minded persons who met the Acharya were convinced by him that ''Gurupuja'' was not a new thing in Hinduism and Hindu society ; that spiritual powers of the Acharya were transmitted to the craving souls of disciples, only when their undivided attention was drawn to the Acharya through devotion and service. He explained that this reverence and devotion, shown to the Acharya, were sure to be transplanted in the domestic and social life in the form of devotion and respect to the parents, of reciprocal love and faithfulness between husband and wife, of love and affection, between brothers and brothers and amongst brothers and sisters and in many such social relations. The Acharya regretted that with the disappearance of the ''Gurupuja'' from our individual and collective life, all such sweet relations of love and devotion have vanished from our domestic and social life and we have been beset with endless miseries and unhappiness in our individual life, indiscipline in household life and dispute and dissensions in social life.

This system of 'Gurupuja' is not an innovation in India. From time immemorial, the system has been in vogue and according to it

every Hindu has to worship his spiritual guide. Not only this much ; but socially every Hindu ought to regard his parents as Gurus and even as veritable gods on earth and as such worship them daily and specially on a ceremonious scale on a particular (Mahalaya) day of the year. All the celebrated prophets and Incarnations in India were worshiped by millions of their followers. So the re-introduction and re-installation of that old system in the society by the Acharya was cordially accepted by the masses who still had in them their intrinsic simplicity of faith towards God-Incarnations.

UNFAVOURABLE AGITATION AGAINST GURUPUJA

But it seriously agitated the so-called enlightened classes who boasted of their modern education and culture. It aroused in them a spirit of jealousy and misunderstanding. So, unfavourable criticisms and gross vilification of the Acharya became a common topic in this circle. Some of them tried, by ventilation of designed reports in the newspaper, to convince the public that the Acharya had fallen off from his ideals and his nationbuilding plan of activities, and had degenerated into the position of 'Mohant'—a religious autocrat who trades on the blind faith and ignorance of his followers and exploit them on pious pretences. The monk-preachers of the Sangha had to face vehement oppositions and stern criticisms and sometimes organised vandalism in many places.

Strange it was, however, to note that the critics carried on their mischievous propagandas from behind and never had the frankness or courage to meet the Acharya face to face and question the reasons of the demonstrations. The timidity of their mind was however betrayed through their admitting that the Acharya had some mysterious power that hypnotised all who came in touch with him.

THE ACHARYA IN DIVINE EXALTATION SOWING THE SEED OF DHARMARAJYA

As years rolled on, the range of the movement became wider and wider and its intensity greater and greater. During the years 1929-30-31, the waves of the movement spread over several provinces of Northern India. The Movement attained its tremendous spiritual momentum when in February, 1932 on the auspicious full-moon day of Magha, the Acharya, in an exalted state of Divine inspiration sat on a decorated altar gorgeously attired as the Jagat-Guru (the Spiritual Master of the world)—the prophet of the Age, and was ceremoniously worshipped and propitiated by millions of people assembled, on the occasion. In the next year, in February 1933, on the same Full-moon day of Magha (the date of his birth and the date of his Great Illumination), he again rose to the pinnacle of his spiritual exaltation and took his seat on a decorated throne as the Monarch of the future "Spiritual Kingdom of Heaven on earth" in right royal grandeur with a golden crown on his head, a sceptre in his hand, and dressed in a regal robe. Army of volunteers, armed with swords and spears and other weapons were renting the sky with their cry of victory and thousands of people were transported with heavenly joy and bliss to witness a concrete vision of the future ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven (Dharma Rajya) in the making and made prostrations at his feet with utmost devotion.

Public criticisms and vilifications also rose naturally to their highest level and the newspapers were clamourous in spreading scandals. Even his monk-disciples, who had been organising the functions, as his instruments, failed to appreciate the efficacy of these demonstrations. Troubled by agony and confusion, when they approached the Acharya for clarification of their doubts, the Acharya exclaimed from his high spiritual flight "I am an instrument in the hand of the Almighty Will ! What do I care for

the criticisms and scandalisations of the ignorant people ! No power can deviate me an inch from my path or retard my progress ; no, not, even if the whole world combines against me. Oceans dry up before me, mountains pulverize at my order, fire becomes as cold as water at my touch ; do I do anything myself ? no ; all that are done, are done by the Almighty Himself through me. I am only to sow the seeds of the Divine will in the life of the people". Descending to his normal state, he would them console his monkdisciples that he would next inaugurate such vital activities for social and national reconstruction that the antagonistic attitude of the critics and scandal-mongers would, in course of a few months, be actually changed into cordial sympathy and active co-operation ; that those very newspapers which had been most vociferous in ventilating nefarious articles against me, would express greatest confidence in and convey highest compliments to me and propagate most in favour of my Sangha.

The Acharya had his prophecies fully justified as we shall see in course of dealing with his later movements and activities.

Prof. Dr. Prashant N. Mukadam
G-4506 M.S.

REFORM OF HOLY PLACES

THE HOLY PLACES OF INDIA ARE THE DEPOSITORY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY.

Religion and spirituality is the foundation of Indian nationality. The Indian nation had its origin, not in towns and cities, amidst the din and bustles or urban life, not in the busy centres of commerce and industry, nor in the laboratory of scientific researches ; but it had its origin and growth in the calm and quietitude, in the peaceful and tranquil environments of the blissful hermitages of the Indian Sages and Seers. Those hermitages and holy places, where the great sages and Divine Incarnations lived, meditated and inaugurated their philanthropic ideals and activities for amelioration of the suffering humanity, had become sacred source of spiritual inspiration from time immemorial. Gaya, Kashi, Prayag, Puri, Vrindaban, Hardwar, Nasik, Ujjain, Kurukshetra, Naimisharanya and hundreds of other holy places, had been the centres of religious propaganda, social reformatory movements, educational achievements ;—in a word, the very heart of Indian national life ; the perennial reservoir whence the people drew their draughts of vital energy for thousands of years.

During the periods of down-fall in the history of the nation, when any Incarnation or towering spiritual Master had appeared to give the people an upward start, then they invariably chose the holy places of pilgrimage, as their centres of activity. Millions of people from all ranks and status of the society pour in, even to this day, to these holy places, every year, with a view to get rid of their vices and be electrified by their holy spiritual atmosphere. No organisation, no invitation, no arrangements are required for that.

But unfortunately these holy places of India in course of time, lost their former spiritual glory and life-giving influences. They are

not even now free from all that are bad and hateful, being haunted by mischief-makers, ruffians and moneyhunters at whose hands the innocent pilgrims have to suffer endless harrassments and extortions. As such, the pilgrims instead of spiritual inspirations and fresh energy, carry with them germs of immorality and a gross hatred for these holy places. Hence, reconstruction of India's social and national life on the basis of spiritual ideals, which is the demand of the age, needs immediate reformation of these holy places.

THE ACHARYA UNDERTAKES THE REFORMATORY MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY PLACES

The Acharya, in his early life, on his way to Gorakhpur, halted at Gaya to perform the Sraddha ceremony (devotional offerings to the departed forefathers). The harrassments which he got at the hands of the pandas of Gaya, set him thinking about the degeneration of the holy shrines of India and evoked a strong determination in his heart for the reformation of the shrine of Gaya and of course of other shrines also.

The atrocity of the opression of the pandas of Gaya rose to its climax in the year 1924, when several Bengali woman were ravished, murdered and thrown in the streets. The local Bengali Association, for remedy, invited public organisations to undertake the work of reformation. The Acharya at once remembered his former determination and forthwith started a "Sevashram"—hermitage of public service at Gaya and engaged monks and volunteers to work at his directions.

The method of work which the Acharya adopted was indeed unique. He declared no direct war against the ruffians or the Pandas. He followed his own peaceful ways of (a) Giving shelter to the Pilgrims in the rest house of the Ashrama, (b) creating spiritual and devotional atmosphere through regular daily performance and

occasional observances of various religious functions in which the pilgrims freely participated and were thereby benefitted by contracting religious fervour and spiritual inspiration.

THE METHODS ADOPTED WAS UNIQUE AND PEACEFUL

The Acharya knew well that the hearts of the pandas and the miscreants could not be changed, either by the power of muscles or by legal punishment. What they were really afraid of was the organisational strength. So the Acharya , along with the above-mentioned programme of work, began to create a movement for the reformation of the holy places of India. For the purpose (a) he carried on extensive propaganda with the help of the newspapers and by publishing and circulating necessary literatures in various languages ; (b) organised elaborate relief operations invariably every year to serve the millions of pilgrims assembled at Gaya on the occasion of the Pitripaksha, at Banaras on the occasion of Annakuta, at Allahabad, Hardwar and Ujjain, on the occasions of the famous Kumbha Mela at Shonepur during the Harihar Kshettra Mela at Puri on the occasion of the holy festival of Ratha-jatra of Lord Jagannath.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE PANDAS

The above process of work and propaganda had tremendous effect on the mind of the Hindu public, as well as, on the heart of the pandas and the designing miscreants, and the movement spread like a conflagration all over Northern India. Liberal donations from the benevolent public enabled the Acharya to raise huge buildings in various pilgrim-centres as rest-houses for the pilgrims. These rapid developments and progress of the movement led the pandas easily to realise that the support of the entire Hindu population is at the back of the Acharya and his Sangha. As a result the head of the

pandas were humiliated and sought friendly co-operation of the Acharya, on condittion that no aggression would be perpetrated any more on the pilgrims and that their religious rites would be allowed to be performed at reasonable rates according to the capacity of each of the pilgrims.

OCCASIONAL REVOLTS OF THE PANDAS

Of course taking advantage of the narrow political provincialism, that was sometimes fostered by the designing pseudo-patriots, the wicked group of the pandas occasionally revolted and tried to upset the system. In those occasions also, the Acharya brought them under control, not by direct tussles but by means of organisation and vigorous propaganda through various means, all over the land. Of the series of movements, launched by the Acharya in quick succession, almost simultaneously, this reformatory movement of the holy places yielded immediate appreciable results ; so that distinguished persons, were often heard to say in course of conversation or on the platform that the Acharya would have attained undying fame, only for the stupendous service he had rendered to the nation by this colossal work of reformation of the holy places, even if he had not undertaken any other work.

The Acharya did not rest satisfied with doing this much, he persuaded and inspired the religious leaders of various sects and the itinerant monks to once more reshoulder their forgotten responsibility of preaching and propagating true spiritual ideals and practice, in order to restore the former purity of the holy places. The Acharya explained to them that unless and until scattered religious forces were organised to fight against the evil, the reformatory activities in those holy places, would have no permanent effect.

THE ACHARYA'S CALL TO THE MONKS AND RELIGIOUS HEAD TO RE-SHOULDER THEIR RESPONSIBILITY

In view of the fact that the authorities of various temples and Maths and different religious sects, who had at their disposal huge properties and crores of rupees which were entrusted to them by the pious Hindu public, through ages to be spent on protection and propaganda of religion and spirituality throughout the land, had forgotten their sacred duties and responsibilities. The Acharya reminded them of their forgotten duty and warned them that, in case they did not utilise the stupendous fund in religious and social services, it might be confiscated by legislation. The Acharya organised hundreds of religious conferences in the holy places and invited all the religious leaders to participate in the discussions and to device ways and means to undertake national welfare works.

The distinguished leaders of the country like the late celebrated Deshabandhu C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru were eloquent in appreciation of the invaluable services, rendered by the Acharya towards national reconstruction. The newspapers untiringly carried on propaganda in support of the Acharya's movements and activities.

Thus the Acharya could create and win for himself the most sincere feelings of love, devotion and gratitude in the heart of the people.

INDIAN CULTURAL MISSION

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN PROPAGANDA OF INDIAN CULTURE

Swami Vivekananda, Founder of the famous Ramkrishana Mission, remarked in course of one of his eloquent addresses that one blow outside India was worth ten thousand within. What the Swamiji meant was that the Indian people had forgotten the greatness of their own spiritual heritage, their religion and culture and the glorious achievements of their fore-fathers in every walk of human life—secular or spiritual ; that they had been so much dazzled by the glamour of the wonderful achievements of physical science and so much enamoured of the materialistic outlook of the Western Culture that they had been almost swayed away by a spirit of defeatism and inferiority complex ; so that, whatever was appreciated or held in high estimation by the foreigners was found to be considered by the people of India the best and the greatest ; and everything, however good and great, concerning their own religion or culture or achievements, was sure to be depricated by them, if it had got no approbation from the foreign intellectuals. The Swamiji realised this fact through experiences of his own life when he saw that his ideas and ideals were not appreciated or given importance by his countrymen before he was idolised in the West for his victorious exposition of Hinduism, as the mother of all religions, in the Parliament of Religions, at Chicago. Even to this day in independent India, the same inferiority complex is still enduring.

THE MISSION OF INDIA IS SPIRITUALISATION OF MANKIND

If we closely follow the foot-steps of Indian history, we get ample proof that, time and again, floods of spirituality and culture

emanated from the Indian people and spread their waves all over the world. Torchbearers of Indian spiritual culture travelled far and wide to enlighten the benighted peoples of the Earth. India's mission, from the early dawn of her history, had been a spiritual one. The same mission of India has become imperative, more than ever, to be carried to the entire humanity to show them the real path of peace and happiness.

The Acharya's nation-building objects and activities were, infact, actuated by his philanthropic mission. The Indian people was weak and dominated by the foreigners for many centuries. Everywhere, in every age, the weak is neglected and denounced while the powerful is held in awe and esteem. The Indians, being a slave nation, were slighted and looked down upon by the so-called rich and powerful peoples of the world. In order that the spiritual message of Indian culture could be made to be heard amongst the powerful nations for peace and security of mankind, the Indian people must need be built up into a powerful nation. Here were the remote object of the nation-building activities of the Acharya.

But the Acharya realised from his experience, that his nation-building movements would gather additional momentum from an attempt to disseminate the ideals and messages of Indian culture in foreign lands. For he saw through the slavish mentality of the people that everything foreign, however insignificant it may be, was adorable to them, while anything indigenous, however valuable and worthy, neglected and disdained as worthless. It was for this reason that the Acharya was determined to depute monk-preachers to propagate the higher and philanthropic thoughts and ideals of Indian Culture, in various parts of the world. Here was the inception of the "Indian Cultural Mission" of the Sangha, the object being :—

(1) To preach and propagate Indian Culture amongst the Indians who have colonised in various parts of the world and who have to live away from the touch of their Mother-land and Father-nation.

(2) To carry the universal and philanthropic ideals and messages of Indian Culture to mankind in general to show them the path of peace and security.

(3) To promote universal brotherhood of mankind.

The Mission was first deputed in the year 1929 to preach and propagate in Burma. Through the successive years up till 1938, the Mission carried on its religious and cultural propaganda through two batches of preachers in further India, Burma, Malya and Singapore.

Meanwhile here in India too, propagation of spiritual and socio-religious ideals were being carried on indefatigably in all the provinces. This cultural propaganda through several batches of monk-missionaries were carried on by means of (a) organising public meetings and delivering illuminating expositions of the various aspects of Indian culture with reference to the present social and national problems and their solution ; (b) Delivering lectures on character-building through practice of self-control, self discipline and continence to the students of schools and colleges ; (c) publishing and widely distributing literatures in various languages on the above subject.

The foreign propaganda department of the Mission remained practically stopped with the breaking out of the second world war in 1939. The world war ended in 1945 ; but then great political upheavals and communal aggressions reduced the country to a veritable battle-field with devastations and massacres till 1947.

In 1948, due to repeated invitations and importunities from some friends in East Africa, the Indian Cultural Mission, encouraged by the leaders of the Indian National Congress and the distinguished officials of the Central and Provincial Governments of India, undertook the programme of cultural propaganda in the continent of Africa. The Mission was received with warmth of feelings and unexpected appreciations. It carried on its incessant propaganda in all the towns and important places in East Africa, continuously for a year and a half with unprecedented success that was due largely to the unreserved assistance and hospitality which the Indians in East Africa extend towards it.

Shakti Sadhana (Cult of Power)

THE VARIOUS CAUSES OF NATIONAL DOWNFALL SUGGESTED BY VARIOUS LEADERS

The present degradation of the Indian people in view of its glorious past has set many talented persons a-thinking as to what might have been the root-cause. Spiritual idealists and religious culturists are of opinion that the degeneration has been due to waning of spirituality and faith and devotion to God and religion. Consequently revival of spiritual idealism and restoration of religious fervour have been suggested by them as the remedy. The social reformers who have been toiling for social uplift, maintain, on the other hand, that spirituality and religion are abstract things ; when manifested in the social life, they become tangible. Hence waning of spirituality and religion is really due to social chaos. In the opinion of the social reformers, social ameliorations and reforms are vital for national advancement. Accordingly they prescribe removal of untouchability, abolition of the caste system, reconversion of the renegades, temple entry by the deppressed class people, widow-re-marriage, reclamation of the aboriginals and such other allied activities to be the sure path of national uplift. But the political leaders ascribe the national downfall to political slavery for many centuries. Their decision that freedom of India would solve all the problems of Indian national life. But economists nod their hands in dissent and suggest that the Indian people was hurled into gradual degeneration, due to economic slavery and break-down of its economic structure. They question significantly that how the people who are illfed or starved and incessantly oppressed by hunger and want of the very bare necessaries of life, can pay their attention to the spiritual ideals or religious ceremonies or social reforms ? Hence the first thing to be done, in their opinion, is to

raise the economic status of the people, to let them have proper food and clothing and other indispensables of physical existence ; then everything else will follow.

ALL THE IDEAS AND PLANS FOR NATIONAL UP-HEAVAL PRESUPPOSE REWAKENING AND CONCENTRATION OF ENERGY

The suggestions of all the leaders, thinking, planning and working in various fields of national life, according to the opinion of the Acharya, were all valuable and vital ; but how to carry out those ideas into effect was the question. Whatever and however well-thought might be the plans, schemes, and programmes of religious, social, political or economic upheaval, he argued, what we required first, was sufficient power and energy to translate the same into action. Look to the moribund masses of India. It is lying, as Swami Vivekananda viewed, as a sleeping Leviathan for centuries together, forgetful of its past greatness, unconscious of its immense potency, thoughtless and hopeless about its future uplift. What is necessary, first and foremost, is to wake up its sleeping energy, organise its scattered forces and create determination of self-defence and self-expansion. It is only after the re-vitalisation, reinvigoration and reorganisation of the inert disintegrated masses of India that all sorts of salutary activities for national emancipation in its various fields will bear their desired fruits.

The Acharya visualized the all-round national degradation of Indian people, and his penetrating vision went into the root and realised that infusion of energy and awakening of the powers, laten and dormant in the people, is the primary work. He often remarked significantly "Can a man who is already dead, be actually benifitted by any lofty idea, ideal or plan or work put before him ? The people have been lying prostrate like a dead body. What is the good of trumpetting into their ears all those high-sounding ideas and lofty ideals and schemes after schemes of national regeneration ?"

ACHARYA'S MOVEMENT FOR NATIONWIDE INTRODUCTION OF THE CULT OF ENERGY

Under these circumstances, in addition to the various sorts of religious and social movements and activities already started by him, the Acharya, undertook in 1928, a vigorous movement for the propagation of the cult of strength by inspiring the people and showing them the right method for the cultivation of strength and energy, manliness and manhood. He did this in a manner, peculiar to the Hindus in accordance with their religious outlook of life and spiritual conception of the world.

CELEBRATION OF THE DURGA PUJA IN ITS REAL NATURE

In 1928, a Divine impulsion drove the Acharya to celebrate the most popular religious festival observed throughout India—the "**Durgapuja**"—devotional propitiation of the Goddess Durga—the Mother of the universe—the personification of the cosmic power of creation, preservation and destruction of the world. Propitiation of the Mother—the Cosmic power dates back to time prehistoric in 'Satya yuga'—the first cycle of existence when king Suratha performed it to regain his lost kingdom. Next it was performed in the 'Treta yoga'—the second cycle of existence by Sri Ramchandra, the human Incarnation of Lord Narayana, the preserver of the world, to infuse fresh strength and determination into his army and thereby to finally conquer the despot, demon-emperor Ravana. In both the cases, the infinite cosmic power personified as the Goddess Durga in her militant mood, riding on a lion, crushing a demon under Her toe, holding ten kinds of weapons in her ten hands, accompained by Lakshmi,—the Goddess of wealth, Saraswati—the Goddes of knowledge, Ganapati—the God of the masses and Kartikeya—the God of military power, appeared before their devotees and bestowed on

them her powers and blessings. From that remotest period of national history, the Hindus perform this national religious festival all over India ; the kings did it with the object of protecting his kingdom and his subjects against aggressions ; the conquerors for spreading their empire and people in general for health, wealth, fame, security, knowledge etc.

Why did the Acharya undertake to perform the religious festival ? What did he aspire to achieve through the performance ?

The religious and social rites and institutions of Hinduism, introduced by the ancient Aryan Seers of India who had the knowledge of the Universe, its past, present and future in the hollow of their palm, had three-fold meaning and application—Spiritual, material, and cosmic. The Goddess Durga, the Mother of the Universe is the Primal Energy manifested in Her spiritual, material and cosmic aspects. Spiritualy propitiated, She vouchsafes to the aspirant emancipation from the bondage of Maya (illusion of ignorance) ; materially worshipped, she bestows worldly prosperity to the devotees ; and served faithfully as the cosmic power in the social and national life, She promotes social and national progress and achievement, peace and welfare and ensures security and victory against aggression of any kind—internal or external.

Due to the religious, social and political revolutions during centuries of national slavery, the Hindus have lost sight of the spiritual and cosmic aspects of the Divine Mother and her worship and have been clinging to the steriotyped rituals with a hankering for individual welfare, ostracised from a cosmic urge for self-expansion towards collective prosperity. Thus the religious institution which, from time immemorial being rightly performed, served as a source of inspiration to the race and as an inexhaustible

reservoir of energy to the nation, during hundreds of centuries of its exalted spiritual, cultural and political careers, have at present lost its true significance and object.

The Acharya, in order to re-introduce the Cult of Energy, in its militant and organisational aspects, in individual and social life of the slumbering Hindu masses, sought to revive this national religious institution in its true spirit with its original meaning and object, towards building up of powerful Hindu nationality, as we shall notice in course of our discussion.

We have noticed in course of our study of the life of the Acharya that by dint of uncommon spiritual penances from his boyhood, the Acharya rose above the consciousness of body and mind, his ego, his individuality being completely merged in the Absolute ; in consequence of which his life,— his body and mind became a Divine instrument in which descended the Cosmic will of the Providence to work out His decrees. To be more clear, the Cosmic Will had embodied itself in the personality of the Acharya. The Acharya, under Divine urge, was then ready to transmit that will into the heart of the people ; so that the tremendous potentiality, dormant in them might be released. And the celebration of the Durgapuja festival was the channel through which the transmission was operated.

The festival was celebrated at Banaras, the premiers holy place of India where it is said that the Lord Shiva, Himself resides with Goddess Annapurna, who feed the universe. All the monks and workers of his Sangha were directed to attend and take part and all the devotees, as well as, the general public were cordially invited to freely participate in the celebration. A beautiful clay model of the Divine Mother, as described above, was built and the performances were done with great eclat for three days with the usual rituals done by the priest, amidst loud congregational chanting of the sacred

name of the Mother, accompanied by the reading of the sacred scripture ''Chandi'' in which the secrets of the incarnation of the Goddess and Her inscrutable dispensations for the good of the world have been described in beautiful poetry.

From the first celebration of the festival in October, 1928, it became a regular annual programme of the Sangha and the performance underwent gradual developments in successive years. Mammoth religious and cultural conferences were organised on this occasion for three consecutive days. Renowned scholars, distinguished professors and educationists and reputed leaders were invited to discuss spiritual ideals and principles and development of the Indian social system, ways and means to organise and unite the disrupted masses into a wellcompact nation and other allied subjects. The conferences were attended with exhibitions of physical valour and ability through performances of physical feats and heroic display of weapons and skill for selfdefence, demonstrated by enthusiastic youths.

THE DURGA PUJA CELEBRATIONS

The celebration were performed in three days. The image of the Goddess, were brought in a grand procession, including hundreds of orchre-clothed monks with trident and other weapons in their hands, hundreds of youths brandishing swords and various weapons and band parties playing on varieties of musical instruments, accompanied by loud cheers for the Goddess and songs in her praise in chorus. The whole atmosphere thrilled, as it were, with the enthusiasm of according a reception to the Divine Mother, the heart of every devotee being transported with joy and felicitation, just as a little child feels at the sight of its affectionate mother after a long seperation.

The worship of the Divine Mother began, every detail of the functions being preceded by chanting of the Vedic Mantrams. First,

the Priest offered to the Mother, ablutions by the waters of various holy rivers, seas, springs and lakes and other choicest things. Then the priest invoked with utmost devotion, the presence of the Mother in the Image. At this point, the Acharya, in a mood of spiritual exaltation, being led in a procession, stood before the Mother ; while his monk-disciples were singing, in chorus, the name of the Divine Mother. The house was full to suffocation. The beautiful Image of the Divine Mother was there shining with splendour in a living posture with a sweet and attractive smile on Her lips and with a look of ineffable affection in Her eyes, extending Her protection and bestowing Her blessings to Her devoted sons. The priest was performing the rituals by the utterance of Vedic hymns ; the monks, with their heart full of devotion and face glowing with divine fervour, were singing devotional songs. In the midst of all these the august presence of the Acharya, with his towering and sublime appearance, with his face beaming with a celestial lustre, his eyes half closed in spiritual trance, rendered the scene thousand times more imposing. The entire atmosphere had been throbbing with spiritual inspiration and the hearts of the devotees present had been raised to a blissful heavenly level where they had the vision before them that as if the Divine Mother and the Acharya were one and identical ; as if the Mother had embodied Herself in the person of the Acharya. As long as the particular function continued, the audience almost forgot the outward world, their entire attention being absorbed by overflowing emotions of devotion and piety. The same scene was enacted again next day during the worship of 'Chamunda' who is, as described in the Scripture, one of the many personified aspects of the Mother and who devoured the entire party of innumerable ''Raktavija Asuras'' in her cosmic mouth, as an act of favour towards the Gods, during their war against the demons. Another thrilling scene was witnessed when in the evening ''Arati'' and other devotional rites and observances of various kinds were performed for several hours to

propitiate the Mother. The "Arati" was attended with heroic display of various weapons and dramatic scenes of war between the Gods and the demons.

Adjacent to the temple of the Mother, there was another temple where the Acharya was worshipped thrice daily with devotional grandeur by hundreds of monks and other devotees both men and women. The Acharya would, in a state of spiritual trance, sat for hours together to accept the devotional offerings and propitiations and to confer blessings on the devotees who felt that the Mother Herself was bestowing Her affectionate benedictions through the Acharya.

Thus the entire period of three days with the exception of a few late hours of rest at night, was spent in continued performances of worship of the Mother, reading of the Scriptures, chanting of the holy name of the Mother, worship of the Acharya, sessions of the conferences and devotional observances before the Mother and the Acharya.

On the fourth day, the Image of the Mother along with the Acharya was led in a huge procession to the bank of Ganges, the Acharya sitting on a decorated car. All the monks and workers of the Sangha were singing devotional songs in accompaniment with musical instruments, the volunteers playing with weapons and the sky was being rent by the sounds of the drums and trumpets and incessant shouts of victory to the Mother and to the Acharya.

What was the ideology behind the performance of this festival and what did the Acharya sought to impress upon the people through these observances ?

THE IDEOLOGY BEHIND THE DURGAPUJA

In ancient times, the demons grew irresistible and occupied the kingdom of heaven by defeating and routing out the Gods. A

century passed, the Gods, although they tried their best, could not regain the suzerainty of heaven. At last they went to Brahma, the Creator and sought his advice. Brahma told them that they could defeat the demons and regain their lost empire only by the grace of the Divine Mother. The Gods were eager to know the Mother as to who She was and how to propitiate Her. The Brahma explained to them that the Mother was the Cosmic Power, creating, preserving and destroying the universe ; that She is immanent in the Universe ; that She was present in the heart of all the Gods ; and that She will manifest Herself in person when all the Gods would unite in a well-compact body, with one mind, one heart and one determination to invoke her blessings. The Gods understood the hidden meaning of the instructions of Brahma. They at once undertook strong determination to sink all differences and dissensions and unite in a body and carry on war against the demons. Forthwith the fire of their indomitable determination came out of the persons of all the Gods and assumed the form of a conflagration which was gradually transformed into the blazing Image of the Mother of the Universe–the Goddess Durga. The Gods then worshipped the Mother with deep devotion and were blessed by the Mother in return. They were then able to completely defeat and destroy the demons and re-occupy their heavenly empire. This is the mythological description of the incarnation of the Divine Mother. The import of the story is that the Gods were divided amongst themselves ; so they were defeated by the demons, and so long as the Gods indulged themselves in disruptions and dissensions, they could not regain their kingdom ; but as soon as they could rise above their differences and petty quarrels and unite with a collective determination of recovering their lost empire from the clutches of the demons they became irresistible. Here lies the secrets of united efforts,—that united we stand and divided we fall. It also indicate that military powers, however great and

well-equipped that may be, are sure to prove impotent if they are not backed by the strength of unity and organisation.

This mythological incident was related by the sage Medhas to the king Suratha who lost his kingdom and retired to the forest hermitage in despair. Inspired by the instructions of the sage, the king worshipped the Mother and empowered by Her blessings, defeated his enemies and recovered his lost kingdom.

In every society, four kinds of forces are noticed to be working through four sects of people :—(i) The power of knowledge, (ii) the power of wealth, (iii) the power of self-defence and self-expansion (Millitary power), (iv) the power of unity and co-operation. Accordingly people in the society are divided into four sections :—

The Brahmana (those who cultivate and spread knowledge), the Kshatriya (those who defend the society from internal disturbances and external aggressions), the vaishya (those who acquire wealth by commerce, industry and agriculture), and the Sudra (those who serve the society with physical labour), When these four kinds of strength develop simultaneously in the society and the four sections of people strive for and co-operate with one another towards common social welfare, then is the golden time for progress and achievement of the society. So long as this equilibrium of four kinds of power endure, society remains prosperous, without any fear or fall. But if unfortunately, one or other or all the four kinds of forces are on the wane, and the balance of power is lost, then step in degradation and decay of the society. The four powers working in the society are not fundamentally different but variations of the same cosmic power, manifesting through all. The Hindu sages and seers, by their transcendental vision realised this truth and introduced the Durgapuja festival with the sublime object of upholding and demonstrating, before the eyes of the people, the secrets of the four kinds of social powers and also of indicating

through the rituals, the method of their culture and development and maintenance of this equilibrium.

A little reflection will reveal the idea behind the plan of the Image of the Mother. The Divine Mother Durga is the embodiment of the cosmic power working in the human society. Of Her two daughters—the Goddess **Saraswati** is the symbol of the power of knowledge—one aspect of that cosmic power ; the Goddess **Laksmi**, the symbol of the power of wealth—its another aspect. Of the two son of the Divine Mother, **Kartikeya**—the Commander in-chief of the Gods, signifies the military power (of defence and expansion), the third aspect of the cosmic power **Ganapati**, the personification of manpower of the society, is the fourth aspect.

The Divine Mother, invoked in the image, is propitiated through the prescribed rituals, devotional offerings, prayers, penances and meditations etc. But what is the right way of worshipping the cosmic power—the Mother in Her real indentity ?

The Mother is the extirpator of the Asuras, those who, for their self-aggrandizement and self-enjoyment, lord it over the world, ushering terror, persecution and devastations, in utter disregard for God, religion and morality ; so the Mother Blesses those who take the sacred vow and determination of destroying the demoniac forces for the peace and prosperity of mankind. The Mother is power personified ; so She is pleased with those who are always up and doing for the cultivation, development and application of strength and energy in individual and social life. The mother is the personification of the sum total of all the powers in the universe ; so Her victorious mercy manifests where there is unity—co-ordination of will and concentration of energy. The Mother stands armed against the demonpower with a militant mood ; so Her proper propitiation requires regular culture of military powers for the defence of the country and the society against the aggressors.

The Acharya saw through the innumerable problems of the Hindu society, but at the same time he realised that want of strength and energy had been mainly responsible for its down-fall and distress ; that no plan or programme of national and social amelioration would succeed until that vital want is removed. It was for this reason that the Acharya, through the observance of this festival, tried to impress upon the mind of the Hindu public, the idea that revival of strength—military and organisational—its culture, development and proper application, was at present urgent and absolutely necessary in view of the impending vicissitudes, dangers and difficulties, threatening Hinduism and the Hindu society.

THE IMMERSION CEREMONY OF THE HOLY IMAGE

The festival came to a consummation on the fourth day. On that afternoon the Acharya together with the image of the Divine mother was led in a huge procession to the bank of the Ganges. The procession included band parties, music parties, and a following of thousands of monks, volunteers and general public ; the procession was punctuated at places with heroic display of weapons and physical feats. There were several big boats, arranged in a line, well decorated, illuminated and equipped with microphones. The Image of the Mother was placed on the roof of one of the boats and the Acharya took his seat on another, surrounded by the monks, sittings in a semi-circle behind him. The spacious bank of the Ganges for miles looked like semi-circle galleries, crowded by lacs of people—men and women, pressing for accommodation. There were dozens of images of the Mother, arranged in long lines, ready for immersion. Playing of musical concerts, beating of drums, blowing of conch-shells, peals of victorious cry to the Divine Mother and devotional songs echoed and re-echoed through the atmosphere. The eyes of the numerous audience were eager to see the

devotional demonstration of burning incense before the image of the Mother and of brandishing of swords and display of other weapons.

But the most imposing scene was there where the Acharya, dressed in bright orange robe sat on a high, decorated seat amidst his hundred monk-disciples, all clothed in ochre. The crimson rays of the setting Sun, released a celestial scenery, holding the audience spell-bound. All the eyes were fixed on the Acharya whose towering figure with matted locks of hairs on the head and a golden trident in the hand, suggested to the audience, the concrete vision of the Lord Shiva, the presiding Deity of the city of Banaras. Devotional songs and lectures on socio-religious subjects by eloquent monks and distinguished professors went on for hours. The function ended with immersion of the image into the waters of the Ganges and worship of the Acharya who bestowed his blessings on all.

One thing was particularly remarkable that during the period of this festival, the Acharya, overwhelmed his devotees and the pious public with his motherhood and motherliness. The entire feature of his physique specially the face, would always glow with a feasible expression of softness and motherly affection. He blessed and fed all with motherly care and attention. All who came in his touch in that period intuitionally experienced a vision of the Divine Mother in him and got through him a tangible touch of Her mercy and grace.

HINDU SANGATHAN MOVEMENT

INCEPTION

THE ACHARYA'S UNIVERSAL POPULARITY

Thus preparing the back-ground through his foregoing movements and activities, the Acharya was gradually moving towards the consummation of his Mission. The activities of the Sangha had, by this time, gradually, spread all over the land and reached people of all ranks and files of the soceity ; so that the Acharya's wonderful personality was being widely felt and appreciated. He now became known as a friend and guardian of the poor and the helpless, through the incessant humanitarian activities of the Sangha ; he was held in high esteem by the young generation, specially, the student community, as their moral guide and spiritual teacher ; Hindu pilgrims from all parts of India and greater India, adored him as their protector, guardian and religious teacher in the holy places ; the house-holders regarded him as their saviour and spiritual Master ; he became known as a religious reformer through his wide-spread movement for the revival and re-instatement of the true spirit and import, lying behind all religious observances and festivals which were observed all over the land with regular pomp and grandeur ; he was admired as a champion of man-making education, being the founder of many educational institutions, conducted on the basis of moral and spiritual ideals, for the simultaneous development of physical, mental and intellectual powers ; he became a social magnet attracting people of all ranks and status, having transcended the social conventions and barriers by his unreserved over flowing love and compassion, specially for the depressed and the down-trodden masses.

His growing fame and popularity, of course, elicited, as I have already mentioned before, ignominious jealousy and strong

resentment amongst certain sections of people who could not tolerate his overshadowing personality and hence raised vehement opposition. Their malicious propaganda reached the culminating point in the year 1934. His monk-disciples, seriously disturbed and confounded, appraised him of the unfavourable situation and told him that it was necessary, then, to take adequate measures to stop the activities of the designing mischiefmakers.

CONCEPTION OF HINDU SANGATHAN MOVEMENT

In December 1934, the Acharya decided to undertake a full-fledged nation-building movement, incorporating into it, all the foregoing movements and activities of the Sangha. He, in a gathering of his monk disciples, expressed his plan and told them that he was then going to launch a comprehensive movement of social and national reconstruction that would be dear to every man and every woman of the society ; that it would be an organised and synthetic movement ; accepting all, rejecting none, fostering friendship, sympathy and co-operation with all other institutions working for the welfare of the society and the nation ; and that in order to achieve this object his Sangha would have to equally share, with the nation, all miseries and vicissitudes and to undergo all ordeals of dangers and difficulties. He further stressed on the fact that his plan of social and national reconstruction would be adopted by all leaders and institutions of the country in near future, there being no other alternative. The Acharya gave clear hints of his ensuing movement in a dialogue with one of his monk-disciples as follows :—

Monk—What will be the object of the movement ?

Acharya—The object of the movement will be to reorganise, re-unite and re-vitalise the disintegrated and disrupted Hindu masses into a well-compact Hindu nation.

Monk—How can it be compatible with the original objects of the Sangha which is nonsectarian in its outlook and hence pleged to universal welfare ? People will thus misunderstand the Sangha all the more.

THE SANGHA'S HINDU SANGATHAN MOVEMENT IS ABOVE SECTARIANISM

Acharya :—Why ? The Sangha is not going to stop its humanitarian and philanthropic activities to devote all its energy and resources to the service of the Hindu society only. We are Hindu monks ; propagation of Hinduism and Hindu culture and amelioration of the society are included into our duties and responsibilities ; who dare deny it ? Moreover Hinduism is the only religion that does not admit of any stereotyped creed or dogma and the Hindus are the only people that has imbibed and exhibited a spirit of universal toleration and welfare, throughout the history of its national life ; and the basic idea of my Hindu Sangathan movement will also be to disseminate the ideals and spirit of Hinduism and Hindu culture for promotion of love and fellow-feeling and to creat conditions for lasting peace amongst the warring and worrying peoples of the Earth with the help of the well-organised, well-disciplined and powerful Hindu nation.

Monk—There had been many movements for religious revival and social reform in the Hindu society. Would there be anything original in your movement ?

Acharya—Certainly. There had been many religious leaders and social reformers during the last few centuries ; but none of them summoned the entire Hindu population under the denomination "**Hindu**". There were leaders to call and organise the followers of Islam as "Mahomedans" and the followers of Christianity as "Christians" ; but none to call the Hindus as "Hindu." Some

organised the Brahmo-Samaj, some established Arya Samaj, while others founded the common political platform for the Indian nation. The result has been that in each case small sections of the Hindu society have become organised and enlightened to the exclusion of the overwhelming mass that remained inert and unconscious, as ever, steeped in the darkness of ignorance and superstitions.

ORIGINALITY OF THE MOVEMENT

I have, however, determined to rally under the banner of my Sangha, the Hindus of all classes and creeds and of all denominations in the one epithet "Hindu". Don't you see that when called by the name "Rama" amongst several other men sleeping together with him in a room, Rama wakes up and none else. This shows beyond doubt that a man responds only when he is called by his own name. This is true also in the case of a nation or a community. A nation responds when it is called by its own dear name. Know it for certain that with the growing Hindu consciousness in the heart of the Hindu masses, will wake up the energy latent in them.

Monk—May we not apprehend a clash of ideas and ideals with the political movement that aims at building up an Indian nation, including people of all communities, irrespective of their faiths ?

THE MOVEMENT FOLLOWS THIS PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

Acharya—No, not necessarily. In the first place, we are not opposed, in any way to the political conception of building up a mighty Indian nation. On the contrary, our objects of nation-building, on the basis of moral and spiritual ideas and ideals, will supplement the attempts of the leaders in the political field. Secondly, the Muslims are well-organised and well-compact ; the

Christians also are well-organised, well-disciplined and well-protected ; but it is the Hindus who constitute, practically, almost the entire bulk of the Indian people, are utterly disrupted, divided and distressed. As such, it behoves that the first and foremost efforts of the nation-builders, ought to be to knit up the disintegrated Hindu masses into a well-compact whole ; this is but the sure way towards national emancipation. The national cohesion of Indian people will progress only in proportion as the Hindus are united in sympathy and co-operation towards the achievement of a common aim.

Monk—There are several other institutions that aim at amelioration of the Hindu society. Should our activities be directed along the same channels ?

LOVE AND SERVICE ARE WATCH-WARDS OF SOCIAL REFORM

Acharya—The Hindu society is huddled with divisions and dissensions, innumerable, inconsistent and unreasonable. It is, however, impossible to do away with all these and cast the entire society in a pattern, altogether new. Reconstructional works are similarly impossible unless and until a thorough overhauling is not undertaken. To take any programme of social reform, that would create unmanageable revolutions, does not suit the ideals of the Sangha. Hence our work would be to let the social life-current flow naturally and uninterruptedly along its traditional channel and to facilitate the same to carefully remove the impediments, that have been retarding the progress of the social life, in the form of age-long dissipations and superstitions ; and in the attempt we should keep our eyes always watchful not to make the society, the target of out unsympathetic attacks. Love and service, sympathy and fellow-feeling, friendship and co-operation should be our watchwords in the path.

Monk—Exactly true. To shower blows at the superstition and defects is nothing but breaking down the skeleton of the social structure to pieces and thereby to dig its grave.

SOCIETY IS A LIVING ORGANISM SHAPING ITSELF ITS OWN BODY STRUCTURE

Acharya—During the past century, there was none amongst a host of prophets and reformers but Swami Vivekananda who brought before the Hindu society a new light of hope and encourgement and a brilliant prospect for the future. Like the body of a man society is also a living organism and not a machine, life-less and inert. The Cosmic Self resides in it and wields the social body-structure with a tremendus life-force that curve out its own zigzag course by dint of its own momentum, accumulated through its own traditions. Any attempt to direct the course of the society through a new channel, designed by any body according to his sweet will, is foolish, futile and suicidal. Who are you to dictate paths to the society ? You are only the servant ; you are to serve the society like an humble servant of the Lord, who manifests Himself through the social corporation.

Just as a human body attains its natural growth by dint of its inherent vital powers ; so also a social organism grows and progresses naturally by its life-energy, along its past traditions. No reformer can boast of enforcing anything upon it from outside, any such attempt being extremely harmful. Social reform must come from within and ought not be thrust upon from without. True reformer is he who goes to the root-cause of social degeneration and upholds, with the glowing instances of his own life and character, the ideals and principles, duties and responsibilities of individual and social life, which had been its veritable life-blood.

Monk—What should be the name of this Hindu Sangathan Movement ?

Acharya :—"Hindu Samaj-Samanwaya Movement" for the re-adjustment of the Hindu society.

Monk—Should it be a purely social Movement ?

THE ACHARYA'S HINDU SANGATHAN MOVEMENT IS REALLY OF RELIGIOUS NATURE

Acharya—No, not necessarily. Religion and spirituality are abstract and impractical, so long as they are not reflected in the society in thoughts, words and deeds of its members. So social re-adjustment pre-supposes religious and spiritual upheaval ; more so, because the life of a Hindu, his individual, his house-hold life, as well as, his social life has been planned and built upon the basis of religious ideals by the sages and seers of India. During the past few centuries, there had been in the Hindu society, series of religious movements by great religious leaders and prophets ; but being ostracised from social life and its duties and responsibilities, those religious fountains have failed to be permanent sources of inspiration of the Hindu society, having been unable to evolve, from day to day better-order, congenial to the growth of Hindu nationality.

The Hindus are not so much in need of ideas and ideals as they are in need of strength of unity and organisation and power of self-defence and a will for self-expansion. Ideas and ideals they have enough ; they have enough of plans and programmes. But everything has become meaningless for want of strength and energy. The entire Hindu population is to be revitalised by infusion of tremendous energy.

Monk—What would be the method of releasing that tremendous current of power, latent in the Hindu masses ?

HINDU MILAN MANDIRS ARE THE CENTRES OF THE MOVEMENT

Acharya—"Hindu-Milan-Mandirs"—unity centres for the Hindus are to be set up from village to village and town to town, where the Hindus of all classes and creeds will gather together regularly and occasionally through various religious functions and social welfare activities. This will bring in fellow-feeling, co-operation and cohesion amongst the Hindu masses. These organisations, being knit up and attached to the centre, will become a veritable reservoir of national strength.

The Hindu Milan Mandirs will, infact, be the centres of religious inspiration, social reform, educational enterprise and cultural propaganda.

OBJECTS OF THE HINDU MILAN MANDIRS

Here every Hindu will be inspired by the ideals and glories of Hinduism and Hindu culture. Animated by Hindu consciousness every Hindu will imbibe a devotion and faithfulness towards the Hindu ideals and institutions that will remain unshakable in defiance to the waves of pseudo religious propaganda of the foreigners. Here all Hindus—the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the caste Hindus and the so-called untouchables—all will sit together as brother to brother and participate equally in all functions. Here will be set up institutions for spreading education on moral and religious basis amongst the illiterate masses ; here will be clubs and gymnasiums also for physical culture, body-building, as well as, self-defence.

Here the discussion ended. The Acharya ordered one of his monk-disciples to write out and print a prospectus of the new movement within a week. He expressed his determination to undertake, soon, an extensive propaganda tour in the rural areas of Bengal to give a start to the movement amongst the neglected depressed population.

Amongst many uncommon characteristics of the Acharya was one that deserves mention here. Whenever he had any definite decision, he would at once gird up his loins to carry it out and would not, most probably he could not, stop till he had translated it into action. Divine Will and Mission would goad him irresistibly on. The day, his divine intuition of building up of a Hindu nation took regular shape in his mind as the definite plan and programme of "Readjustment of the Hindu society Movement", as hinted above, he became restless to set up the movement in right earnest and with utmost intensity. His fountain of love and sympathy for the depressed masses of the country was released with unimaginable force. He had then recovered from a fell-disease, just a few days before and his body was still weak, emaciated and anaemic. But no physician's importunities could hold him back from his decisions. He remained inexorable in his tour programme.

THE ACHARYA'S NOVEL METHOD OF PROPAGANDA NOT IN THE TOWN BUT IN THE VILLAGE

It is a remarkable fact that whenever a religious preacher or a social reformer or a political leader desires to launch a movement, he invariably begins it from the towns and the metropolis, amongst the enlightened gentiles, their confirmed idea being that once the thinking brains accept certain ideas and ideals, the general mass will naturally follow them and readily accept the same. But quite different was the path of the Acharya. He sowed the seeds of his movements, not in the towns, never amongst the thinking people, first and foremost ; but invariably amongst the ordinary people, the village masses ; and then gradually to the intelligentia of the country.

He admired the frankness and simplicity of the rural folk and their faith in and devotion to God and the spiritual Masters. He would say to his monk-disciples that it was the rustic masses on

whom were conferred Divine blessings, first of all, in every age. It was "Guhak chandala", 'Sabari chandalini', and the monkey king 'Sugriva' with his followers that received the love and blessings of Sri Ramchandra, the Divine Incarnation of Narayana. It was also, the illiterate uncivilised cowherds of Vrindavan that loved and served Srikrishna, the Divine Incarnation of the Supreme and enjoyed His choicest blessings. Jesus was accepted, loved and served by a few young fishermen, first of all ; SrichaitannyaDeva, the Divine Incarnation of Bengal, was denounced by the upper class people ; but his doctrine of devotion and love was accepted by the lower classes of the society and he was worshipped by them as a combined incarnation of both Srikrishna and his consort Sri Radha.

THE ACHARYA'S OVERFLOWING LOVE AND KINDNESS FOR THE DEPRESSED PEOPLE

The Acharya's untold love and sympathy swelled up like the breakers in the ocean and proceeded to deluge the depressed and the down–trodden people of the society, who had been for generations mute sufferers of endless miseries and privations. During the last thousand years there were scarcely anybody except a few spiritual Masters to look after them, to utter to them a single word of sympathy ; they had been forced to live a beastly life, deprived of the light of knowledge, oppressed and suppressed by the rich and the powerful.

It was the month of December ; winter had set in with all its severity. But the Acharya would not mind all these. His mind was full of that one idea of uplifting the neglected humanity and to put them in proper status of the society ; his heart was overflowing with kindness fellowfeeling and mercy. He practically forgot his body–consciousness and threw himself head long into the movement.

The Acharya with his party of monks and workers set out for the almost impenetrable parts of Bengal, the Sundarbanas area which is

inhabited by the Namasudras, the Pods, the Rishis, the Kapalis, the Dhibars and other lower class people. The villages in that part of the country was dangerously malarious and infested by the tigers on land and crocodiles in water and being nearest to the sea is surrounded by saline waters ; where the villagers have to travel many miles to gather drinking water.

The Acharya travelled like a whirl wind through the villages. As soon as he would arrive in any village, the monk and the workers were forthwith deputed to declare the advent of the Acharya and invite the villagers to meet in a public meeting. He would visit several villages in a day. The Acharya would sometimes reach some villages in the midnight, in that advanced winter, send his call to the sleeping villagers through his messangers and pass with them hours together in talks about the objects and ideals of the movement and the ways and means of emancipation of the rural masses.

The villagers would be taken aback by the surprising visit of the Acharya of whom they had heard so much and from whose Sangha they had, so often, got succour in times of distress. Their joy increased a thousand fold when they heard from his mouth that he was introducing a plan and programme of work for their social uplift ; they saw in him a concrete vision of Srichaitanya Deva, the Incarnation of Divine love and would worship and propitiate him with sincere devotion. A thrill of extreme felicitation and a wave of great enthusiasm swept over the villages where people were elated with hopes of a better order of the society in which they would find themselves in better conditions and higher status. Gradually the Acharya entered into the backward villages of various districts and within the course of a few months, he visited hundreds of village in various parts of Bengal. The waves of his movement gathered momentum from his extensive tour not only in Bengal but in other provinces and spread with greater speed on all sides. The movement got a great impetus also from propaganda in the

newspapers which regularly published his tour programmes and the reports of his activities. The notice of the enlightened public and the distinguished leaders was automatically drawn to the laudable objects and activities of the movement and particularly to the personality of the Acharya.

The Acharya was so much absorbed with the details of the movement that he could think and talk of nothing else ; he had little time to look even to his bare physical needs, as regards diet and sleep. The foundation of his unbounded love was released for the depressed humanity and the Acharya, during this time, became, as it were, all love, all kindness, all sympathy and all compassion. He would talk to the rustic village people as his own dear ones, took food from their hands and blessed them over and over again. He would smilingly tolerate their uncouth behaviours and undue importunities and was always glad to fulfil their desires, however, unreasonable and troublesome. The doors of all the institutions of his Sangha were set upon for free accommodation of the boys and youths of the untouchable classes, many as students and others as workers ; they were put in the same status with the boys and youths and men of the higher sections of the society.

THE ACHARYA'S HINDU MOVEMENT CONFIRMED IN MAMMOTH HINDU CONFERENCES

In February, 1935, the first Hindu Conference was organised by the Acharya at the seat of his great Illumination at Bajitpur. Distinguished leaders took part and the gathering included at least a lac of Hindus from all classes and creeds. Apart from the two regular sittings of the conference, there were many religious functions in which all classes of Hindus including the untouchables freely participated. Groups of athletes and sportsmen, from amongst the fighting classes of the Hindu society, demonstrated heroic physical feats and display of weapons. Save the addresses delivered by learned speakers, leaders of the rural population also

were invited to give vent to their feelings and ideas. Many resolutions on the practical application of the ideas and methods of the movement were adopted amidst great enthusiasm and loud applause. The Acharya declared in this conference that :—

(a) "This movement for the re–adjustment of the Hindu society aims at all–round amelioration of the Hindu society with the ultimate goal of building up a well–compact powerful Hindu nation on the basis of spiritual and religious ideals.

(b) It is non–political and non–sectarian ; it extends co–operation to all other institutions that has been working for social amelioration of the Hindus.

(c) It seeks to raise the status of the depressed and the untouchable classes in various ways and to put them in their respective positions in the society.

(d) The main theme of the movement is to organise and unite the scattered Hindu masses all over India and for the purpose :—

(i) Hindu Milan Mandirs are to be set up from village to village and town to town.

(ii) All Hindus, irrespective of castes or creeds, would be cordially invited to join, on equal status, in all the religious and cultural functions, held in the Hindu Milan Mandirs.

(iii) Various religious functions—including Vedic sacrifices, common prayers and rituals, scriptural expositions and discussions on social problems and ways and means towards their solution would be held in the regular weekly gatherings of the Hindu Milan Mandirs.

(e) Institutions for free primary education of the poor classes of Hindus and charitable dispensaries would be started in connection with the Hindu Milan Mandirs.

(f) A congenial atmosphere of liberal thoughts and ideas should be created ; so that the renegades might be willing to re–enter the

Hindu Society and be cordially accepted by the people, after regular "Suddhi" or expiation ceremony.

(g) The Aboriginals ought to be reclaimed and accommodated in proper positions in the Hindu society.

The reports of the conference together with the resolutions adopted, being ventilated through newspapers, created a great agitation in the intelligentia of the country who considered favourably the utility of the movement and offered their assistance and co–operation. The conference had also tremendous effect on the heart of the depressed classes who began to adore the Acharya as their veritable saviour and clung to him with faithfulness and devotion.

THE ACHARYA'S PROPAGANDA TOUR IN VARIOUS PROVINCES IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The Acharya then again undertook a vigorous and more comprehensive propaganda tour. He was accompanied by hundreds of monks and workers, in his huge boat—"The Kandari"—with all the necessaries. The detailed programme of his tour was declared beforehand and the people were thrilled with joy and enthusiasm. During this tour wherever the Acharya went, Hindu conferences were forthwith organised ; Vedic sacrifices, congregational prayers and religious observances were performed. All worshipped the Acharya with sincere devotion. Gatherings of thousands of villagers were over–powered with unprecedented religious fervours. They forgot their divisions and were filled with a brotherly feeling. The Acharya blessed them to his heart's content and at his direction "Hindu Milan Mandirs" were organised wherever he set his foot.

While the boat sailed through the rivers the Acharya would order his monks and workers to get down on both banks in several groups, each group equipped with musical instruments and

songsters. The party of ministrels, singing songs on the ideals and glories of the past, would visit from door to door in the villages, ushering new hope and encouragement in the stagnant rural life and discuss with the villagers the social amelioration movement undertaken by the Acharya. During this tour, hundreds of Hindu conferences were organised from place to place ; hundreds of Hindu Milan Mandirs were set up from village to village ; innumerable religious functions were performed in towns and villages and demonstrations of physical strength and valour were exhibited everywhere.

THE PRECARIOUS CONDITION OF THE BENGAL HINDUS UNDER MUSLIM LEAGUE MINISTRY AND THE ACHARYA'S TACTFULNESS

During this time, the political horizon of India was over–clouded and reverberated with peals of thunder. The leaders of the Indian National Congress carried their fight with the British Bureaucracy to the climax. The British diplomacy of divide and rule created a permanent cleavage, on communal basis, between the Hindu and the Mahomedan population of India and the Hindu Congress leaders following a policy of appeasement, were sacrificing the basic religious, social and economic rights and privileges of the Hindus to purchase the support of the Muslims, in their fight against the British Government. But the Muslim League, under their shrewd leader Zinnah, was implacable. On the contrary, the Muslim League, took advantages of the appeasement policy of the Congress and made the best use of it by squeezing out as much special rights and privileges as they could. Moreover, they carried on continual inhuman oppressions and presecutions in the form of arson, rape, looting and massacre, from place to place all over India, upon the Hindu population who were pledged to the creed of non-violence of the Congress. The condition of the Hindus became precarious in Bengal where the Muslim League Ministry was in

power. The League Ministry adopted all legal and illegal steps to humble the Hindus, socially, culturally and economically. The situation of the Hindus became simply unbearable. But the Congress leaders turned to it a deaf ear and a blind eye. It was at this critical juncture that the Acharya ushered into existence his Hindu Sangathan movement. He had to steer the movement cautiously and tactfully. There were the British Government, the League-Ministry and the Congress. The Acharya had to run his activities without any clash with any of the above forces. For the purpose he had to fully instruct and train up his monk-disciples and workers about the ideal of the movement, its nature and method of work.

UNITY, FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION ARE WHAT THE HINDU'S NEED MOST

The Acharya cleared the position of his movement saying—"I don't like to fan the flame of communalism my object is to put down the communal miscreants. I cherish no grudge on the Muslim population ; no, not in the least ; on the contrary, I would like that the Hindus should learn from the Muslims unflinching love and devotion to God and religion and sincere love towards their fellow brethren and also learn to sink individual interests in the greater welfare of the society and the nation". He emphasised that criticism and the vilification are signs of weakness and cowardice ; it only weakens a man. So the Hindus should be instructed to look to their own defects and wake up their latent energy and valour through unity, friendship and co-operation ; that when the Hindus would stand as a well-compact whole and when a single blow on a single Hindu would bring reaction on the entire Hindu society,—then and then only the communal mischief-makers would stop, being conscious of the fact that the entire Hindu population would rise up with one voice and united strength to remedy the evils done to them.

He imprinted upon the mind of his monk-disciples that his was not a social reformatory movement ; and that his was a religious movement that aims at building up of the nation on the basis of religious and moral ideals. But he warned that only routine preaching and teaching of religious ideals would not be of any avail if they could not solve the existing social problems.

THE DOWNFALL OF THE HINDUS IS REALLY DUE TO THE WANT OF LOVE OF AND REGARD FOR HINDUISM

The Acharya pointed out the real cause of the downfall of the Hindus as a nation and explained that the Hindus, although they think themselves religious, had in reality, fallen far away from the true imports of their religion. Hinduism teaches that weakness, cowardice and inertia are the greatest of sins while heroism, valour, manhood and manliness, are the greatest of merits. Hindusim of to-day, if it does not make the Hindus strong and invincible against all aggressions on their legitimate religious and social rights and against all onslaughts on the honour of their women, it is certainly not true Hinduism ; it is pseudo-Hinduism. Real Hinduism inspires a man to manfully perform all his religious and social duties and stick to his ideals and principles, even on pain of death.

The Acharya stressed that in India, religion and spirituality are the foundation of natonality, that Indian nationality needs, for its growth, a moral and spiritual atmosphere ; and that any attempt to divert it in a foreign channel would be a death-blow to it.

THE MOVEMENT WILL FORCE THE SANGHA TO SHARE EQUALLY THE WEAL AND WOE WITH THE HINDU RACE

The Acharya electrified his monk-disciples with the fire of his divine inspiration and asked them to shed all doubts and despondency and believe in the heart of their hearts that the Sangha had never left unfulfilled, any programme of work which it had

undertaken ; that they were Sannyasins who had renounced everything and stood on the streets in the name of the Lord ; that they were indefatigable and invincible without care for trials and vicissitudes, dangers and death ; that they had stood in the forefront of the Hindu nation with the determination of defending the oppressed and repressed Hindu population and they shall have to do it at any cost. He reminded them of the wonderful idealism and heroism of Rana Pratap and his great love for Hinduism and the heroic tactfulness of Maharajah Shivaji and assured his monk-preachers, time and again, that revival of Hinduism and Hindu nation to be as sure as the Sun rising in the East and that they should have to work, work and work on to pave the path for the realisation of the Divine Mission.

RAMIFICATION OF HINDU MILAN MANDIR

During the period from 1934 to 1938, the 'Readjustment of the Hindu society"—movement spread over Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and the united provinces. The Acharya adopted various means to diffuse the ideals and activities of the movement far and wide :—

(a) He engaged many monks and workers, as preachers and organisers and sent them in small groups to carry on propaganda work from village to village and town to town and to organise "Hindu Milan Mandirs" with an association consisting of the local distinguished Hindus from all classes, to function the same *(b)* Himself carried extensive propaganda tour with a big following of workers as described above *(c)* Mammoth Hindu Conferences, in which renowned scholars and reputed leaders participated, were organised at the direction of the Acharya in the various Ashramas of the Sangha in different provinces, on the occasions of the anniversary celebrations there. *(d)* He induced the authorities of the various newspapers to carry on regular propaganda in favour of his reconstructional movement. *(e)* Literatures of various kinds

conducive to the propaganda of the ideas and ideals of the movement were published and widely circulated at his order. *(f)* Innumerable religious functions were organised in towns and villages all over the land on occasions of the Hindu festivals at his desire ; in which thousands of Hindus of all classes high and low took part with great enthusiasm.

In this way in course of four years, the movement had its sound footing upon a ramification of two thousand Hindu Milan Mandirs extending over several provinces and a unanimous support of the Hindus of all classes. The movement got sympathy and support equally from the general Hindu public as also from the leaders of the Congress and other political parties, as well as, from the high Government officials. The Hindu Milan Mandirs were all interconnected and joined to the Central Office of a systematic organisation.

VILLAGE DEFENCE ARMY

PLIGHT OF THE HINDU MINORITY OF E. BENGAL UNDER MUSLIMS LEAGUE-REGIME

In the meantime, series of communal riots were organised by the designing Muslims under the connivance of the Muslim Leagues in various parts of the land ; in which the peace-loving Hindu population suffered immense loss of life and properties. The Acharya, of course, rose equal to the occasion and stood with his army of workers by the side of the sufferers and lent them support and succour. But when heart-rending news began to pour in at the office of the Sangha from the preachers and workers of the Sangha about the inhuman atrocities, perpetrated on the Hindu minority of East Bengal, specially on the honour of Hindu women, the Acharya could contain himself no longer. He determined to undertake another movement to put a successful check to the riot-mongering ruffians. He called on all the important Hindu leaders and appraised

them of the precarious situation of the Hindus of East and North Bengal and requested them to come forward and take adequate steps to stop the devilish depredations.

THE ACHARYA'S INITIATIVE TO PUT A CHECK TO THE DEVILISH DEPREDATIONS

The Acharya immediately organised several conferences in quick succession in which he invited all the Hindu leaders of Bengal and the Editors of the newspapers. Distinguished speakers delivered authoritative reports of the horrible situation of the Hindus of Bengal. At the initiative of the Acharya, a resolution was unanimously adopted to organise a village defence army in the name of "Hindu Rakshi Dal", from village to village, all over Bengal to ensure security of the minority Hindus. The newspapers became eloquent in appreciation of the move of the Acharya. To give a practical shape to the resolution, the Acharya was indefatigable in sending the monks and workers of the Sangha to the interior villages to organise the defencee parties and to train them up in arts of self-defence with legal weapons, himself going from door to door to rouse the responsible people to undertake the movement in right earnest and requesting the rich to open their purse in support of the suffering millions of their own breathren. The Acharya became restless and day and night talked of the pitiable plight of the Hindus and of the means of their deliverance.

THE ACHARYA'S CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE BENGAL HINDUS

His anxiety was often betrayed when he would utter impatiently. "If I be spared to live five years more, I would organise the whole Hindu population in such a way that none would dare to touch it with a finger even." At this time, the future woeful plight of the Bengal Hindus stood naked before his omniscient vision and his mental anguish became unimaginable. He

worked day and night with the exception of one or two hours at night for rest ; that too not for himself but for his workers. He became sleepless and when requested to take a little rest for health, he would thunder "Real and uninterrupted rest will come one day when this body will lie 'in the grave ; no talk of rest before that."

THE ACHARYA'S DETERMINATION TO UNDERTAKE A DEFENSIVE EXPEDITION

Not satisfied with this much, the Acharya planned to visit the important towns and villages of East and North Bengal with a huge following "—

(a) To infuse a spirit of unity and organisation, as well as to awaken self-confidence and manliness in the heart of the oppressed Hindus for their selfdefence.

(b) To give additional impetus to the organisation of the Hindu Rakshidal and to impress upon the workers their grave responsibility.

(c) To confer with the local leaders about the situation of the local Hindu population and to entrust upon them the responsibility of establishing Hindu Milan Mandirs, as a common meeting platform for all classes of Hindus and organising village defence army in every village.

Accordingly a tour programme was prepared and published through the newspapers. Monk-preachers and workers were sent to respective places to anounce the advent of the Acharya and to arrange with the help of the local leaders, public meetings and religious functions. On the eve of his journey when the Acharya was talking with his monk-disciples about the details of the programme, one of his disciples raised a question as to what would be advisable to do, in case, any communal miscreant committed any disturbance. Another disciple opined that it would not look well to tolerate such misdeeds and that proper steps should be taken

to punish the mischief-makers. Others suggested that to take any hasty step on their part, would not be advisable ; for that would only worsen the situation instead of improving it. The Acharya who was listening to the discussion flared up—"I won't allow any coward to accompany me in my tour. Those only who are ready to risk their lives at my order should go with me." The discussion stopped and the disciples were all fired with the spirit of heroic expedition against the communal ruffians and remembered once more the impregnated words of inspiration of the Acharya—"Success crowns those who are unflinching in determination and undeviated from resolution."

This expedition of the Acharya was twice undertaken once in the month of July and August in 1939 and again in May and June, 1940. The oppressed Hindu population were transported with endless felicitation and hope of deliverance at the unexpected tour-programme of the Acharya. Reception Committees were immediately organised by the local Hindu leaders and the local youths were organised to accord grand ovation of welcome by leading the Acharya in huge processions. As the Acharya visited the places, one after another, enthusiasm and joy of the people increased more and more. Railway platforms could hardly accommodate the huge enthusiastic crowd and people would be fighting, so to say, to get a view of the Acharya and to pay him reverential obeisance. The Acharya attended the public meetings which were simply over-crowded. He discussed individually with the leaders and vouchsafed interview to the general public. He would, in this way, be busy from morning to 12 O'clock in the night.

THE ACHARYA EXPLAINS THE REAL OBJECTS OF THE HINDU MILAN MANDIRS

The Acharya in his talk with the local leaders explained that "Hindu Milan Mandir," as is usually conjectured from the name, is

no temple ; that temples there are thousands in India, but those temples had no connection with the day-to-day life of the people ; that "Hindu Milan Mandir" was not built up with bricks, or stones or wood ; but it would be constituted by the re-union of the severed limbs of the Hindu society with the main body ; that it was a common platform where the entire Hindu population, not excepting the untouchables and the aboriginals, might stand, as brother to brother, in unity and co-operation under all circumstances ; that it would be a centre of religious awakening, social reform and cultural revival. The Acharya pointed out to the leaders that the Hindus have education, intelligence, money, as well as, creative energy. What they lacked was the strength of unity and organisation but for which the Hindus were being humiliated and molested, everywhere. The Acharya expressed his firm determination of knitting up the whole Hindu mass through a net-work of Hindu Millan Mandirs, spread all over the land and invited them all to lend him their quota of assistance in the matter.

RECONVERSION OF THE RENEGADE HINDUS

The question of re-conversion of the renegade Hindus also attracted the attention of the Acharya. He pointed out to the Hindu leaders the fact that the ancient Hindu Rishis converted millions of non-Aryans and accommodated them in the society and it was in this way that the Hindu society expanded itself. Later on, since the Hindus thought it better to be selfcontent, giving up all ideas and attempts of self-expansion, the Hindu society had been dwindling away in number, falling victims to the proselytising aggressions of foreign Faiths.

"But" the Acharya remarked "If you invite a man to your house and shut up your doors against him, would it be of any avail ? The Hindu society as it stands at present, is still steeped in meaningless superstitions and conservatism and is not ready to tolerate re-conversion and re-accommodation of the renegades and the aboriginals. What is needed is to wake up the sleeping masses and

infuse into them a spirit of unity, co-operation, self-defence and self-expansion. Such an attempt through systematic organisation will soon pave the path for re-conversion. "Hindu Milan Mandir" programme of work is the only sure and constructive means."*

THE ACHARYA'S VIEW ABOUT HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

Being questioned as to the utility and possibility of the Hindu-Muslim-unity-attempts of the Congress the Acharya put forward his unambiguous decision that friendship could grow up between equal persons or parties and never between a lion and a fox, between a tiger and a lamb. He explained that the Muslims were well-organised, well-compact and powerful on the strong basis of their Islamic faith ; while the Hindus were still divided and disintegrated and hence weak and feeble. As such, the Acharya opined, it was nothing better than a utopia to build up unity and friendship between these two unequal parties. The Acharya assured that there was one and only way for establishing Hindu-Muslim unity and that was to organise and unite the Hindu masses into a powerful and well-compact nation as the Muslims and that his "Hindu Milan Mandirs" were planned to achieve the above object.

THE ACHARYA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNTOUCHABILITY

In discussion with prominent Hindu leaders the Acharya vehemently denounced the sin of untouchability that clung to the Hindu society like a veritable canker, eating into its very vitals for a thousand years ; he could not even imagine how a Hindu could be untouchable to another Hindu. There might be reasons against intercaste marriage but untouchability should, on no account, be tolerated or hood-winked. The Acharya regretted also that the

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* Since then the Sangha has been steadily reconverting hundreds and thousands of renegade Hindus who became Christians and Mahomedans.

so-called enlightened people of the present age, who understood the many ills brought in the society by this nefarious prejudice, not only tolerated but themselves maintained the superstition. He requested the leading Hindus to be up and doing to uproot the evil by themselves practising and preaching equality of all Hindus, irrespective of their present religious and social status through the Hindu Milan Mandirs.

HOW TO ERADICATE THE EVIL OF UNTOUCHABILITY.

The Acharya, however, warned the workers and preachers against being overenthusiastic in the matter and applying any force or undue pressure upon any body. For he explained that the root of the evil practice is in the heart and that if people did not realise, in the heart of their hearts, what a lot of mischief had been done by the malpractice of untouchability, it would not be possible to eradicate this evil, in spite of stray occasional demonstrations of inter–dining and inter–mixing. In order to solve the problem basically the Acharya suggested that in regular gatherings of "Hindu Milan Mandirs" in villages and towns, common religious and social functions were to be performed in which the so called untouchables would be treated equally with the caste Hindus ; through discussions and scriptural expositions, held there, the Hindus should be well–impressed about the demerits of this nefarious custom and every Hindu should be made well–conversant with the truth that man was essentially the Spirit and that the same Spirit was in every man, high or low ; and that to love and serve man, as one's own self, was to love and serve the Lord in every being. The Acharya observed that this was the right process of uprooting the evil of untouchability.

THE ACHARYA'S VIEW ABOUT WIDOW –RE–MARRIAGE

The advocates of widow–re–marriage came in a body to the Acharya for sanction. They advanced three–fold reasons.

They advocated widow–remarriage in order to increase the population, to stop adultery and abortion, and ensure security against abduction by non–Hindu ruffians. The Acharya deprecated the idea on the face of it. He warned them against such superficial considerations and patch works of social reform. He instructed them that the Hindu society should not be judged by the standard of the Christian or the Mahomedan society which were based on secular ideals and temporal achievements and enjoyments.

EVILS OF WIDOW–REMARRIAGE

He explained that the Hindu social system was based on spiritual ideals, that the Hindus maintained that physical existence was not the whole of man ; that man was really the Spirit, beyond decay and death ; and that realisation of this spiritual existence was the sole object of a Hindu. He stressed that self–realisation depended upon self–control and effacement of carnal desires ; that it was for this reason that the Hindus were enjoined by the Scripture, to lead their conjugal life in strict self–control and self–discipline with no desire for sense–enjoyment but with the object of begetting brilliant issues ; that the system of widow–remarriage would destroy this spiritual foundation of the Hindu life.

In the Hindu society, parents were regarded as veritable Gods and were reverenced and worshipped as such by all Hindus. The Acharya remarked that widow–remarriage would lay axe to this holy instinct and sublime practice. Hundreds and thousands of Hindu girls were forced to remain unmarried for reasons more than one. The supporters of widow–remarriage in their excessive sympathy for the widows, failed to see the greater problem of the unmarried girls. The Acharya advised the advocates of widow–remarriage to think deeply over their cause in view of the problem of the unmarried girls. The Acharya drew their attention to the fact that with widow–remarriage would follow divorce, family

dissensions, want of mutual love and trust in conjugal life, indulgence in sense–enjoyments ; thereby dragging down the moral standard of the society.

The Acharya admonished them sternly that they should not consider every problem in the light of Western politics, instead of national tradition ; that the Hindus as a nation should live for spiritual sublimation of life in its entirety and would die for it rather than live a beastly life of eat–drink–and–be–marry.

HOW TO SINK DIVISIONS AND DISSENSIONS OF THE HINDU SOCIETY

When questioned by the thoughtful Hindu public as to how to sink the divisions and disruptions of the society, towards evolving a corporate life—a united Hindu nationality, the Acharya drew their attention to the fact that friendship and co–operation develop and internal and external differences disappear by close and intimate association and that it was due to enormous difficulties under foreign domination for many centuries and super–imposition of alien culture on Hindu culture that the Hindus had been dissipated far from their social and religious integrity. He clearly proved the truth of his statement with illustrations and showed that 90 p.c. of the social problems had originated from want of close contact and free mixing amongst the various classes of the Hindus. He insisted that "Hindu Milan Mandir" as it stands with its objects, ideals and programme of work, would prove a panacea for all the evils and diseases of the Hindu society, in as much as it would offer ample opportunities for inter–mixing of all classes of Hindus on equal footing, through its regular religious and social functions.

ACTION AGAINST THE PANDAS OF GAYA

While the Acharya had been awfully busy in building up, with herculean efforts, the "Hindu Milan Mandir" and "Hindu

Rakshidal" organisations all over Bengal against the aggressive anti–Hindu elements, he was unexpectedly confronted by another difficult task. In 1937 the Pandas of Gaya (the religious priests and guardians of the holy shrine of Gaya) who had been, since the establishment of the "Gaya Sevashram" by the Sangha, faring rather peaceful, revolted against the arrangements of the Sangha, concerning the performance of the religious ceremony of the pilgrims and refused to allow the pilgrims who came through the Sangha, to perform their reilgious rites in the temple. Being appraissed of the situation, the Acharya hastened to Gaya and made arrangements to have the rites of the pilgrims performed by the Ashrama–priests under police guard. Then he again hurried down to Calcutta and began countrywide agitation agains the sinister attempts of the Pandas. He lauched a vigorous movement by organising, in towns and villages, innumerable public meetings and ventilating daily the resolutions of strong protests against the opporessions of the Pandas through news–papers, all over India. Strong editorials were being published in many newspapers, exposing and condemning the nefarious cliques of the Pandas and appealing to the Hindu public to concentrate their opinion to put them down. The agitation went on for more than a month ; as a result the number of pilgrims visiting the Shrine awfully decreased and the scanty number of pilgrims who still visited, would not dare to have their rites and observances done without the supervision of the Ashrama–workers.

As a consequence, the pandas were cowed down ; they sought the mercy of the Acharya to make once for all, a square settlement. Finding that the agitation had produced desired effects and the pandas were really repentant, the Acharya allowed them to meet him in a body and peacefully settled the affairs. In connection with the settlement, the Acharya explained to the pandas that he had been always a friend to them, as he was attempting to restore the religious and peaceful atmosphere of the holy places and had no

desire to interfere in their work. He pointed out to them that with the restoration of the good name of the Shrine, the influx of pilgrims had greatly increased, contributing thereby to their pecuniary gain. The terms of new settlement being circulated throughout the country, the Hindu public were relieved of their alarm.

THE MOHANT OF THE ANNAPURNA TEMPLE SUBDUED

Meanwhile another incident occupied the attention of the Acharya. Banaras is the premier holy place of the Hindus. Every year, during the Annakut festival, millions of pilgrims flock at Banaras to see the Golden image of and propitiate the Goddess Annapurna and receive Divine blessings. On the occasion, elaborate arrangements were made from the Sangha to give relief to the pilgrims, in all possible ways. Some of the volunteers of the Sangha who were posted inside the temple compound, often, protested against the misbehaviour of the men of the Mohant (the religious head and owner of the temple) and informed the Mohant with a request to take steps for proper remedy. The Mohant got enraged at this and ordered his men to drive the volunteers out of the temple compound. Accordingly a clash ensued and some of the volunteers were wounded.

Distinguished persons of the town intervened and demanded for remedy ; but to no purpose. The same sort of tussles went on for several years. But the Mohant remained adamant and the pilgrims were the worst sufferers.

The matter received the Acharya's special attention at this time. During the annual Durga–puja celebrations at the Banaras centre of the Sangha in October, 1938, he organised a huge Hindu Conference in which the leaders of the province, the Ministers and the Commissioner and other high officials were present. A resolution was adopted to take

proper steps for stopping the immoral and undesirable activities of the Mohant of the Annapurna Temple. The Mohant took his last resort in the court of the city–Magistrate by insituting a case against the local Sangha–authorities, with a charge of unlawful intrusion and interference. The case was however summarily dismissed by the Magistrate with remarks that the Temple was no personal property ; that as millions of Hindu pilgrims—men and women, assemble to participate in the Annakut festival, the Hindu welfare associations have every right to provide volunteer arrangements within the temple premises to look after the honour and safety of the pilgrims. The Mohant was humiliated and submitted to the arrangements of the Sangha.

RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENT BILL

In 1939, "the Religious Endowment Bill" was brought before the Indian Legislative Assembly for discussion and acceptance. The object of the Bill was to confiscate the properties of the temples and Maths and the religious institution on a plea to utilise the same in works of public welfare. The authorities of temples and Maths were alarmed and raised vehement opposition to the Bill, considering it an act of sacrilege to Hindu religion. The temples, and shrines and monasteries of India are controlled and conducted by various religious Orders. The Bill offered an opportunity to all the religious Orders, to make a common cause and they built up a united front to fight against the Bill.

Accordingly an all India Sadhu Sammelan (Conference of the monks of various Orders) were held at Banaras ; in which the Acharya was also invited. But as he had been seriously engaged in Hindu organisational activities in Bengal, he could not attend the conference; but he sent a delegation of the Sangha with his decisions in the form of a message to be read before the audience of the conference. The Acharya had been, since 1927, trying his best

to draw the attention of the various Orders of monks to undertake, along with their spiritual and devotional practice, social service activities too, at their leisure periods. His importunities had a good effect on the mind of the monks of India ; who were gradually, being inclined to some extent towards religious and social welfare works.

The Acharya wrote to the Shankaracharya, the President of this all India Sadhu Sammelan that the various Order of monks had, from very ancient times, been the preachers and protectors of Hinduism and the Hindu society. They had with them enormous wealth deposited for uninterrupted propagation and successful defence of Hindu religion and culture. The present leaders of various religious Orders had fallen off from their respective duties and been squandering much of the property in pursuit of personal enjoyments. He requested the president to adopt some such salutary resolutions and to determine such practical ways and means whereby the greater portion of the properties of Temples and monasteries might be utilised in protection and propagation of Hinduism and in the service of the Hindu society. The Acharya insisted that was the only way whereby the Government might successfully be barred from enactment of the Religious Endowment Bill.

The full text of the statement of the Acharya, being published in almost all the news–papers of India, created a new sensation and induced the Hindu public including all the Orders of the monks to consider the matters relating to the religious affairs of the Hindus, from a new angle of vision.

CONSOLIDATION AND DEFENCE

The Acharya apprehended by his infallible fore sight that the present policy of "Nonviolence" and "Appeasement of the Muslims" adopted by the political leaders of India against the

British Government, towards achievement of Indian Independence, would gradually worsen the situation of the Hindus of Bengal ; it might threaten them with total extinction. The Acharya became seriously anxious and restless. He repeatedly gave the alarm, in various ways, to appraise the Hindu leaders, as well as, the general public of the grave situation and the woeful future of the Bengal Hindus. He personally interviewed with almost all the leaders of Bengal without care for his personal prestige and worked day and night to rouse the determination of self–defence in the heart of the Hindus of Bengal.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED IN A CONFERENCE WITH EFFECT TO FORM A "VILLAGE ARMY".

He organised at Calcutta a conference of the Bengal Hindus, in which all the leaders and distinguised persons were called together to consider the critical position of the Bengal Hindus and devise ways and means to cope with the situation. The whole gathering was unanimous about building up of a "Village Defence Army" all over Bengal. It was also decided that every Hindu of the age of 15 to 60, should be enlisted as an active member and that the Defence Army should have to undergo a training in the use of various legal weapons for self–defence.

In the statement which the Acharya gave before the audience, he said—"I am seriously concerned and my anxiety knows no bound after receiving heart–rending reports of continual oppressions on the Hindus of Bengal by way of breaking down of Hindu temples, desecration of Hindu Deities, molestation and abduction of Hindu women and innumerable sorts of mischiefs done by the communal miscreants. I am throughly convinced that no political negotiation will bear fruit, until and unless the rural Hindu masses are organised and electrified with a strong determination of self–defence and are trained up in the art of using legal weapons. For it is an undeniable fact that no law, no arguments, or the

dispensation of justice is an adequate safeguard for one who himself is weak and inactive and unprepared for self–defence. I like to remind the leaders in this connection that even if the much–talked–of Hindu Muslim unity is established in the political field, still, the necessity of re–organising the Hindu society will not diminish in the least ; the real objects of which is to reform and reconstruct the disintegrated Hindu social system and to re–organise and re–unite the scattered Hindu masses into a well–compact brotherhood on the basis of Hindu religion and culture. I assure you that in may Hindu organisational work, there is no room for fanaticism or communal hatred. I believe, on the contrary, that the more the Hindus are organised and united, the more the idea of Hindu Muslim unity will draw nearer towards fulfilment. To re–adjust and re–unite the vast Hindu masses after a thousand years of disruption, what is needed, is to build up a regular and systematic organisation ; so that one stroke on any of its parts or individuals will rouse up the entire system to reaction and remady. The "Hindu Milan Mandir" and "Hindu Rakshidal" scheme will serve as a net–work to knit up the Hindu masses and inspire them with a spirit and will for self–defence."

THE REAL IMPORT OF THE VILLAGE DEFENCE ARMY

A veteran lawyer of East Bengal, with reference to the Acharya's scheme of enlisting every Hindu above fifteen and under sixty years of age, as a member of the village Defence Army, asked the Acharya as to what was the utility of including old men like himself into the Defence Army ; arguing that the youths who are strong, active and courageous, should be enlisted instead of the aged who are weak and inactive. The Acharya wondered at the ignorance of the pleader and said—"If old, experienced, responsible and intelligent persons like you do not take the responsibility of defending the society, then would it be saved by those inexperienced, fickleminded, irresponsible youths ? Has not

Mahatma Gandhi and host of old veteran leaders taken up the gauntlet in the political field to end British supremacy ? It is you, the old and the experienced, are the brain and the youths your arms. Can arms work of themselves without the directions of the brain ? The gentleman was convinced and became a strong advocate of the movement.

Some enthusiasts of the movement approached the Acharya and expressed their doubts to him that in this age of fire–arms what was the utility of the use of swords, spears and other minor weapons ? The Acharya consoled them—"It is the spirit, the will, the determination which is the first requisite ; arms and weapons next. If you put a gun before a sleeping man, will it be of any avail ? No, never. What you ought to do first is to wake up the sleeping person and then teach him the use of a gun. Don't you see that the Hindu masses have been a sleeping Leviathan for a thousand years ! It behoves us all to strain our every nerve to re–awaken this sleeping dragon and call up its dormant energy and heroism. My organisation of "Hindu Rakshi Dal" and training them up in the use of legal weapons for self–defence will serve this purpose."

AN INSTANCE OF SUCCESS OF THE VILLAGE DEFENCE ARMY

Once while the Acharya was seated in his room, early in the morning and talking with some of his monk–disciples about the movement as to how to infuse into the heart of the morbid Hindu masses the fire of self–defence, suddenly a young man, ran up to him in great consternation and fell flat before him sobbing and weeping bitterly, uttering piteously with choked voice that his whole family, consisting of more than fifty members, had been confined in their house besieged by an army of communal miscreants for nearly four months and that they were now on the

verge of death and that death was inevitable to them if no measure of defence and succour was rushed immediately. Extremely wounded at heart, the Acharya stood up in noble indignation, his whole frame trembling in righteous rage, his face was lit up in a reddish glow of a strong and militant determination. He immediately ordered in overflowing emotion—"Inform at once by wire the workers and Captains of the Defence Army in that part of East Bengal to concentrate all the forces at their command there on the spot. Let the tussle ensure, if needs be, to end the communal depredations once for all". The orders were carried out as directed by the Acharya. In the course of a month's time, the result was wonderful. There was no trace off communal oppression. The miscreants fled away being afraid of the concentrated defence forces.

Alluding to this and similar other incidents, the Acharya would insist that organisation of the masses, concentration of forces and the militant attitude and preparedness on their part for self–defence are sufficient to ensure social security and suppression of the fanatic mischiefmongers ; that no regular clash and fighting would be necessary.

HINDU CONFERENCES

During the year 1938, the Acharya organised and attended innumerable Hindu Conferences at Banaras and Allahabad in U. P. , at Puri in Orissa, at Gaya in Bihar and at many towns and villages in the districts of Pabna, Howrah, Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Barisal, Dacca, and other districts of Bengal. The conferences were all over–crowded and the enthusiasm of the audience was simply astonishing. Along with discussions by the distinguished leaders and representatives from different provinces, on the re–organisation and re–unification of the Hindus towards self–defence and on revival and propagation of Hinduism, heroic demonstrations of the

art of self–defence through mock–fight with swords and spears and Lathis by the "Hindu Rakshi Dals" were also held.

Of these conferences, the one in Vikrampur in Bengal was by far the biggest, having attracted several lacs of Hindus from all classes. The Acharya accompanied by one hundred of his monk–disciples and hundreds of workers graced the occasion and was led to the conference in a huge procession consisting of twenty thousand enthusiastic youths and distinguished persons, plodding through six miles distance. The conference lasted for full two days and the Acharya was in the height of his prophetic mood, inspiring and illuminating.

CLUE TO THE SOLUTION OF THE HINDU NATIONAL PROBLEMS

The conference was arranged in a vast open field and wherever one turned his eyes, nothing but human heads were to be seen. The Acharya visualized a concrete instance of the great awakening his movement had brought in amongst the Hindu masses and his joy knew no bounds. He sat in the conference for many hours in the day and in the night. With his stalwart sublime physique with flowing tufts of curling hairs on the head, with his beautiful ovalshaped face with reddish radiance half appearing through the parted hairs like a half–blossomed lotus and his eyes shedding lustres of divine light and clad in bright orange with a golden trident in the left hand and the right hand lifted up in benediction, the Acharya, being seated on his elevated altar, looked like an embodiment of power, knowledge and mercy ; the scene being literally drunk by the million wistful eyes on all sides. The Acharya in his presidential address, amongst many other things, pointed out to the Hindus that the real problem that stood in the way of Indian nation–building was that of national re–organisation and social readjustment of the Hindus. Because , he went on, out of the vast Indian population, the Mahomedans and the Christians, who

formed only the one–fourth of the population, were well–organised and united ; while the Hindus who constituted three–fourths of the total population were utterly disorganised and undisciplined and hence weak and unable to defend themselves. The national life of the Hindus were beset with innumerable problems but the solution of all of them depended upon revitalisation and re–invigoration of the Hindu masses ; which, of course in their turn, depend on the one hand, upon their re–organisation and reunification and on the other hand, upon awakening in their heart an adamant determination and a militant spirit for self–defence. The power of organisation and the power of self–defence and self expansion must have a full and free scope for cultivation in the national life before proper solution of any other problem could be thought of.

The main cause of the down–fall of the Hindus, as a nation, he emphasised, was their dissipation from, love for and faith in their own spiritual ideals and religious observances whence came social quarrels and disruptions. An invincible determination for the defence of its own faith, the Acharya remarked, could only release the latent energy of the Hindu population.

CULT OF STRENGTH IS THE ESSENCE OF HINDU DHARMA.

The Acharya stressed that the essence of Hinduism was the cultivation and right application of strength ; that Hinduism, if it did not strengthen the Hindus physically, mentally, and spiritually is anything but Hinduism, "Shake it off" he said "for, cowardice is the greatest sin ; inactivity and inertia are the greatest irreligion ; while heroism, manliness and manhood are the highest virtues. This was the true spirit of religion thundered by Lord Srikrishna in the Geeta ; this was demonstrated in the life and character of Lord Sri Ram Chandra and all the glorious Hindu sages, saints, heroes, emperors and great men of the past. The life and character of Rana

Pratap, Maharaj Shivaji and Guru Govind Singh were splendid illustrations of this truth."

THE ACHARYA'S SECOND WHIRLWIND TOUR.

In May, 1939, the Acharya undertook another whirlwind tour in the East and the North Bengal, accompanied by a large party of monks, preachers and workers. The dates of his arrival in different towns and places were announced previously in news-papers and by printed handbills. Huge processions were organised everywhere by the enthusiastic local leaders to accord him a rousing reception. People in hundreds and thousands, from distant villages poured in at the towns and places notified. An unprecedented joy and enthusiasm were witnessed everywhere. People longed with inexpressible eagerness andd felicitation to see their Saviour. The Acharya, during this tour was an embodiment of inspiration, strength and determination.

He attended many mammoth conferences during this tour, and people, men and women who had the sight of him was taken aback in wonderment and were intuitionally inspired by a strong will to self-defence and resist manfully all the attrocities and injustices done against them.

The Acharya would sit on an elevated dais. Upon the dais, under a beautiful canopy and against a background of variegated colours, there would be shining, on one end, a big beautiful image of the Lord Shiva, the destroyer of all evils in a pose, threatening the miscreants with a trident in his left hand, and his right hand close-fisted in indignation and on the other end, another image, equally big of the Lord Srikrishna, the extirpator of all demons and wicked Kshattriyas and the founder of the Spiritual Empire, with the Divine Disc-weapen (Sudarshana chakra) in his right hand uplifted and his divine conch-shell (Punchajanya) in his left hand ; and in the middle there would be another image of Lord Sri Ram

Chandra, the hero of the Ramyana and the extirpator of the whole dynasty of Ravana—the demon emperor of Lanka (Ceylon).

In front of the scene the Acharya would be seated with his grand shining figure, in magnanimous silence, with a large golden trident in hand. The huge audience would sit for hours together with mute silence, listening to the inspiring speeches by eloquent monks, exhoring the Hindus to shake off inertia and inactivity, fear and cowardice and to offer a united resistance to the communal oppressors in order to put an end to their inhuman atrocities. The import of the speeches was felt living and inspiring, entering into the very core of the heart of the audience, in the atmosphere created by the divine presence of the Acharya.

THE HINDUS NEITHER WERE NOR ARE AGGRESSORS BUT DID NOT TOLERATE AGGRESSION

In view of the terrible oppressions, perpetrated on the villagers, the Acharya remarked in his statement in the Noakhali Conference, what the Hindus needed were an unshakable will to resist evil and an undaunted strength of self-defence ; that the Hindus had never been oppressors or aggressors in the past nor would they be in future, that the Hindus would not, on that account tolerate at present, any mischief or injustice done to them. The Acharya asked the Hindus to follow the instances of the Maharastra emperor Shivaji and the Shikh Guru Govind Singh and organise themselves against the communal aggressors.

NON-VIOLENCE IS THE WORST FORM OF INERTIA AND INACTIVITY.

At Sonaimuri, the Acharya reminded the Hindus, assembled, that the history of the Hindus during the last several centuries was that of a long continuous struggle for the defence of their religious, and national culture and that in this struggle for existence, the

Hindus had gladly laid down their lives but did never forsake their faith. He sternly warned the Hindus that they were only digging their grave by following the false creed of non-violence in the name of religion ; that it was no non-violence on their part but sheer cowardice and the worst type of inertia.

At Baburhat, the Acharya assured the Hindus, that the only way of sinking all minor differences and divisions in the society was the all-engrossing attempt at the defence of Hinduism and Hindu society against the onslaughts and aggressions that were coming from all sides.

THE ACHARYA DENOUNCES NON-VIOLENCE

At Comilla, the Acharya inspired the Hindus asembled, with his fiery message—"The weak is destined to succumb before the strong in the struggle for existence. God himself turns His face away from the weak and the inert. Shake off all cowardice and inertia and stand heroically, on pain of death, to resist the evildoers. Join you all in hundreds and thousands in the village Defence Army and build up an insurmountable bulwork against the organised hooligans. Bury the idea of so-called non-violence and come out with a will to do or die in your struggle for social and national existence."

HINDUSIM DOES NOT LIE IN ACCEPTING CREEDS AND DOGMAS BUT IN PRACTICE AND OBSERVANCES

At Khulna, the Acharya in his statement explained the real import of Hinduism and said that Hinduism lay essentially in the practice and observances, and not in talks and theories ; that it was a practical method of self-culture and self-discipline that was conducive to the development of strength and energy and heroism in individual, social and national life. He explained of that, as glowing instances for the teachings of Hinduism, the Gods and

Goddesses of the Hindu stood as the veritable embodiments of powers with deadly weapons in their hands to destroy the evil-doers.

On his return from the East Bengal tour, the Acharya was invited to grace a conference at Raipur in C.P. where he inspired the Hindus with his august presence and illuminating message. He remarked that self-defence was birth-right of every created being and the Creator himself had provided every being means and weapons for self-protection. He admitted that the Hindus had been peace-loving and lovers of humanity and as such they were against interference on other's rights and privileges. But he asked everybody to remember the fact that the Hindus never on that ground bore undue oppressions with out resistance. He urged that in this age when struggle for existence had become severest for the Hindus, they would have to rise equal to the occasion and summon up their entire strength to fight manfully to defend their Faith and culture and protect their society against all aggressions.

WANT OF REGULAR SYSTEMATIC PROPAGATION IS THE CAUSE OF THE DOWNFALL OF THE HINDU RACE

In a conference at Gaya of the Hindus of Bihar, the Acharya ascribed the downfall and degradation of the Hindus and Hindu society to the absence of a systematic process of propaganda of Hinduism for many many centuries, amongst the Hindu masses. He drew the notice of the eminent Hindu public to the fact that the Mohants and Mandaleshwars (the heads of the religious Orders) who, with their large following of monks, had been in charge of the propagation of Hinduism and who had, for the purpose, been entrusted with enormous funds and properties by the pious Hindu kings and rich men of the society, were practically leading an idle self-sufficient life. He urged the Hindu public to prevail upon them to reshoulder their forgotten responsibility and utilise their wealth in the service of Hinduism and Hindu society.

HINDUISM MUST BE REPRESENTED IN ITS TRUE SIGNIFICANCE

In a conference of the Hindus of different provinces, gathered on the occasion of the Durgapuja festival at Banaras, the Acharya remarked that Hinduism—Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture should be represented in its true light. For centuries together, heaps of flaws had been gathered in the main current of Hinduism, and as its consequence, the essence of Hinduism had almost been forgotten. He regretted that the Hindus had forgotten the grand conception behind the worship of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses and had forsaken the ideals of SriRamchandra and Sri Krishna, the blazing personifications of Hinduism and contracted various sorts of weaknesses inactivities in the name of love and devotion to God.

FEAR TO FACE DANGERS IS UNBECOMING TO THE HINDUS WHO ARE WORSHIPPERS OF THE DREADFUL ASPECT OF GOD.

In another mammoth conference of the representatives Hindu leaders and distinguished persons at Calcutta the Acharya in his illuminating statement gave out that human soul, which is but the representative of the cosmic soul, is the reservoir of infinite energy ; that Hinduism admits this truth and teaches ways and means towards manifestation of that infinite power. He pointed out that the Hindu did not propitiate only the pleasant aspect of God but daringly faced and adored the dreadful aspect also and loved and popitiated it as the Divine Mother Kali. He regretted that he could not comprehend why the worshippers of the Mother Kali—the dreadful, were afraid of facing dangers and death in defending their faith and honour. Every Hindu, the Acharya went on, was a born philosopher and knew that the world was transitory ; that this body was not the real man, and would fall off like a withered leaf ; and that he was really the soul, immortal and eternal ; still the Hindus of

today hesitated to heroically face dangers and difficulties. He however, urged the Hindus to get rid of the perversions of Hinduism and set themselves to a nation-wide culture of organisational and military powers, as represented in the image and legend of the Divine Mother of the Universe—Sri Durga.

RECLAMATION OF THE ABORIGINALS WAS THE SACRED DUTY OF THE HINDUS

In November, 1939, the Acharya graced another big Conference of the Hindus, mostly aboriginals. His benign presence, his merciful countenance, his sweet words, his loving treatment endeared him to the aboriginal Hindus who clearly saw and inwardly felt in the personality of the Acharya, the love and mercy of Lord Sri Ramchandra who lovingly embraced the aboriginals and partook of their food and treated them as their dear ones.

He said that the aboriginals were parts of the Hindu society ; that form time as far back as the Ramayana, they were cordially accepted and absorbed by the Hindu society. He repented that for the last several centuries, they had been neglected by the caste Hindus and hence they had fallen easy preys to the Christian and Mohomedan proselytizers ; that it behoved the Hindus at present to reclaim the aboriginal Hindus with love and sympathy and try their best for amelioration and uplift of this backward humanity.

Prof. Dr. Prashant N. Mukadam
G-4506 M.S.

DROPPING OF THE CURTAIN

Thus the Acharya exerted himself, day and night, incessantly and indefatigably, till 1940, when the acitivities of his Sangha took a comprehensive and complete shape of the nation-building scheme. He did not spare himself nor his assistant monk-disciples, even in the least. He merged himself so severely in series of activities that his diet and sleep were almost left off. At this period, he would often rise up at 3 P.M., go out in his work and return at 12 P.M. in the night, remaining the whole day, upon a spare diet of a handful off puffed rice and a glass of water.

Any thoughtful observer could, at this time, mark sure signs from his untiring activities, in spite of the disability of his physique which could scarcely bear the severe strain, that he had been rapidly bringing the drama of his kaleidoscopic terrestrial existence to a close and retiring behind the curtain.

In this one year, he finished the construction of several huge buildings for the accommodation of pilgrims in various-pilgrim centres ; organised and consolidated the multifarious activitties of his Sangha, placed his Hindu organisational activities on a sound footing through the ramifications of "Hindu Milan Mandirs" and "Hindu Defence force." He was, at this time, often heard to heave a sigh of relief and utter half-consciously, with complacency that he had given a proper shape to all his contemplated works and that his monk-disciples were competent enough to do the rest.

This fact became evident and clear towards the latter part of the year 1940, when he was overheard to mutter within himself in a halfconscious exalted state of spiritual flight, "I have distributed myself bit by bit, till nothing has been left reserved." Like the great Sri Ramchandra and Sri Srikrishna and the Buddha, the Acharya was Divine Incarnation. He came with a Mission and organised a

Divine instrument—the great Sangha and chalked out, as we have seen in course of our discussion of his life and attainments, a complete plan with the detailed programme of its activities towards fulfilment of the Mission. He worked in harness all through his life, incessantly and untiringly with his body, mind and intellect, to the last drop of their energy and left those of like withered leaves while still, in the harness. His words became a prophecy that his and his apostle's rest and recreation would be in the grave and not before that.

In December, 1940, his body grew unable to bear the monstrous strain of his physical and mental exertions and was rapidly drooping down. He went to his Altar of Divine Illumination at Bajitpur only to return with his final decision of drawing the curtain over the drama of his life. Strangely enough that his determination of his was reciprocated by unexpected thoughts that arose in the heart of the elder and responsible sons of the Sangha whose mind and heart were intuitionally inspired with the idea and feeling that they were then ready and competent enough to shoulder the responsibility of conducting the Sangha, even in the absence of the Acharya. The omniscient Acharya read the depth of the heart of his sons and said 'Yes ! you are all now competent to carry on the work. I am now unburdened of my anxiety and confident of the success of my Mission. I may now retire behind the curtain and see the rest of the drama enacted."

The Acharya was at that time blazing in the horizon of the Indian national life like that meridian Sun and the country-men were enlivened with a new hope of life and emancipation. Nobody could then apprehend, even in dream, that the blazing spiritual Sun will suddenly disappear on the 8th January, 1941, to the great disappointment of the nation of the immature age of fortyfour only. But inscrutable are the ways of the Providence.

But really speaking the great Acharya has not finished the drama and retired finally ; he has only set it on the stage and ushered the introductory scenes and concealed his personality behind the curtain. To be more clear, he desired to manifest himself as many to work out his Divine Mission and he actually distributed himself in the apostles of his Sangha.

The fact is that the Acharya who had been in the fore-front of the Sangha and leading the expedition, has only taken his position in the rear and been inspiring, dictating, guiding and protecting his Sangha, as before. A few incidents will illustrate the fact :—

The Acharya shook of his cage of flesh and blood and entered final Illumination on the 8th January, 1941 at 12-45 A.M. Next morning the shocking news appeared in the news-papers together with the portrait of the Acharya. One aged women devotee of village (Hooghly) some 30 miles of from Calcutta, as soon as the heartrending news reached her, hurried down to Calcutta at the Head office of the Sangha. But reaching the Calcutta Ashrama she saw that the body of the Acharya (according to his direction) had been sent to Bajitpur Siddhapitha—the altar of the Acharya's Great illumination. Her sorrow knew no bounds and so much overpowered was she that she at once ran to the bank of the Ganges to commit suicide by drowning herself in the water of the river. At the point when she was going to jump into the water, the Acharya suddenly appeared before her in flesh and blood and caught her by the hand and consoled her "Beloved child how is it that, you are going to kill yourself ? Did I not tell you time and again that I am always with you ? Don't you see me as before ?" With these sweet words the Acharya led her to the Tram Car and made her sit on a bench and disappeared. The lady, again burst into tears and came back to the Ashram, weeping and lamenting "Ah ! misfortune ! The Acharya gave me darshan but sinner as I am, I have lost sight of him again."

II

A monk disciples of the Acharya who often cooked and served food to him, shortly after his final Illumination, during the car festival of Jagannath at Puri while he was staying at the Puri Sevahsram, one day discussed with a brother-monk "I had often the good furtune to cook for and serve food to the Acharya with my own hands ; which had been a source of great joy to me, alas ! that heavenly bliss shall I taste no more. I prepare food, even now and offer it to the Acharya as before but do not perceive whether he partakes of it or not."

That every night when the Swamiji lay down to sleep, he saw in a dream that the Acharya Deva, in an angry countenance with a huge trident in hand, came to him and knocked him with his toe saying "you lie here, having taken your fill and you don't care to cook food for me." The Swami woke up but thinking it was a mere dream again laid down to sleep. The same dream was repeated twice more. At last greatly alarmed, the monk aroused other brother-monks and apprised them of the story. They advised them to immediately take his bath and cook food and offer it with devotion to the Acharya and pray for his mercy for cherishing disbelief regarding the Acharya's omnipresence and omniscience.

III

In a village of the district of Pabna in Bengal, there was a Kayastha land lord who together with his wife, being, duly initiated, became a staunch devotee of the Acharya Deva. In his village home regular ceremonial worship and offerings of cooked food to the Acharya Deva would be performed. Generally, the wife was to offer the cooked food, having placed it before a big portrait of the Acharya Deva, installed on a tastefully decorated altar. While she performed the rites, a little child of five, her brother's son, used to sit by her side with his eyes closed. One day after the offerings

were duly performed while she came out closing the door of the temple room, the child was sitting within the room, as usual. A few minutes after, the child began to call aloud "Quick, Quick, Oh aunt ! quick !" The aunt who heard his voice from a distance, hurried to the room and asked as to what had been the cause of the noise. The boy told her in a tremulous voice "The Diety sitting on the altar came down and began to partake of the food, offered ; so I called you in fear."

This incident was related to the Sannyasins of the Sangha by that lady-devotee who repented with tearful eyes that she worshipped and offered food before the image of the Acharya Deva, in a steriotyped fashion, as she had seen others to do ; little imagining that the Acharya would appear in person and partake of the same.

IV

The author of the life-sketch of the Acharya, after he had finished the printing of the Bengali edition of the book, while he had been asleep one night, the Acharya Deva appeared before him in an angry mood with a trident in hand and took him seriously to task as to why he had written in the book about his passing away. The monk woke up and fell on the feet of the Acharya and wept and begged to be forgiven for his mistake and prayed for his mercy. The Acharya having then disppeared, the monk kept up the rest of the night in meditation and prayer. Next morning, he went to the press, had that last chapter of the book destroyed and published it in an incomplete form with a page of prayer for mercy of the Acharya Deva added to the end.

V

The Acharya Deva organised Village Defence Parties all over East Bengal towards securing the life, honour and property of the Hindus from organised depredations of the Muslim Gundas. He

promulgated the principle of carrying with every Hindu, men and women, a small trident covered in a sheath like the Kripan of the Shikhs, for self-defence, as well as, for a token of Hinduism. Thousands of such weapons were distributed to the Hindus in the Towns and villages of the East and North Bengal.

A monk of the Sangha gave such a trident to a girl aged about 16, a matric student, for her self-defence, asking her to carry it with herself for 24 hours. The girl devotee obeyed literally.

One night at about 11 P.M. while she came out of her study to go to her bed-room across a small yard the lamp in her hand went out by a sudden gust of wind. While she was making her way forward in the darkness, a ruffian caught her by the hand. The girl was unnerved and knew not what to do, having none to help her. At this point she prayed most fervently with tears in her eyes to the Acharya Deva. In the twinkling of an eye the Acharya Deva appeared before her with a huge trident in hand. The girl regained her lost courage and gave a push to the ruffian who fell down to the ground but rose up again and caught the skirts of her cloth. The girl then remembered her weapon for self-defence, took out the trident from her waist, touched it to her forehead in a mood of salutation to the Acharya, still standing in front of her and plunged the weapon into the chest of the gunda who at once succumbed to the ground with a cry. The girl then ran to her bed room, took her bath and sat down to meditation and prayer up till 3 A. M. All the while she saw the Acharya Deva standing before her with the trident in hand, encircled in a dazzling aura. She immediately wrote the incident in a letter to the monk who had given her the weapon. Need it be said in this connection that the Acharya Deva assured the Hindus, time and again, that those who would faithfully obey him by carrying the weapon with them for 24 hours, would be invariably under his protecting arms.

VI

Babu Subodh Kumar Das Gupta of Barisal who together with his whole family was a staunch devotee of the Acharya Deva who had special kindness for him. Subodh babu served under a Zaminder as a Tax Collector. His office was at Galachipa, a place in the down of the district of Barisal (Bengal) near the Bay of Bengal. Once when he had been coming upto Barisal by a boat, he was overtaken by a terrible storm on the way. The boat at once sunk and he was left alone on the troubled waters of the Bay, fighting with the waves with a plank under his arms. The whole night passed in this way. Towards the dawn, his body became senseless. He had been praying all the while for the mercy of the Acharya Deva. But when he saw that his arms had become sense-less and took weak to cling to the plank, any more he gave up all hope of life and naturally some words of reproach came out of his mouth accusing the Acharya Deva for remaining callous to his prayers at this point of death. Wonder of wonders ! he at once felt the ground under his feet. Subodh babu was overpowered with this instance of boundless love and mercy of the Acharya Deva and wept and prayed for being forgiven for his momentary disbelief.

AUM

Prof. Dr. Prashant N. Mukadam
G-4506 M.S.